FORMAN.

A TALE.

VOL. I

J. MOYES, GREVILLE STREET, LONDON.

FORMAN.

A TALE.

———— Hast thou as yet conferr'd
" With Margery Jourdain, the cunning witch,
" And Roger Bolingbroke, the conjuror?"
Henry VI. Part II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR OGLE, DUNCAN, AND CO.
37, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 295, HOLBORN:
AND OGLE, ALLARDICE, AND THOMSON, EDINBURGH.

1819.

TO

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

THIS WORK IS HUMBLY

Dedicated,

(WITHOUT PERMISSION INDEED),

BUT WITH THE

HIGHEST SENTIMENTS OF RESPECT, ADMIRATION,
AND GRATITUDE,

BY HIS

OBLIGED AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE original hint for the following story may be found in the proceedings upon the Widow Turner's case, for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, 1 State Trials, 3d Edition, p. 339. But it will be as well to add, that the actual murder of Overbury forms no part of the romance now submitted to the public; though certain preparations for, and preludes to, that event undoubtedly do.

Injudicious as the mention of them may be upon the present occasion, the Author scruples not to avow, that he has endeavoured to connect fiction with historical fact, in a mode somewhat resembling a late style of delightful and most deservedly popular romances. To specify instances of the inferiority of this work to those celebrated performances would be endless: the Author, therefore, confines himself to one only. Waverley, Old Mortality, the Antiquary, and that class, are not more admired for accuracy, as to the habits of the era they describe, than for using the very language of those periods:

whereas, in the present story, which treats of the early part of the seventeenth century, the language of that day has not been even attempted, and the manners given nearly as imperfectly. The Author only hopes he has fallen into no gross solecisms or anachronisms. It may well be asked, then, since such is the case, why so distant a period has been chosen at all? To which we reply at once — for the sake of that general conviction of the reality of the necromantic art, which prevailed in James the First's time; and under favour of that (nearly universal) belief, a supernatural agency will be occasionally made use of, without hesitation, in the tale we are now speaking about. Not mysterious circumstances to be afterwards explained away by passages in walls, pictures, skeletons, &c. &c.; but real, downright sorcery, fiends, and spectres. Those who consider all such machinery as diablerie, silliness, and nursery doings, will of course (after this open notice) proceed no further with the book. But to any who may have a fancy for reading it through, the Author proceeds to impart the highest hope of success he entertains, which is this — that, allowing for no few impossibilities, his story may be reckoned pretty fairly natural in other respects.

FORMAN.



CHAPTER I.

On the evening of the 22d of June, in the year 1612, Sir Simon Mondomer was reposing himself in as easy a chair as the fashions of that period would admit of, and enjoyed the refreshing breeze which arose after a sultry day, in no unpleasant situation.

His house was in the vicinity of Whitehall, and looked towards the river over a soft and elegant garden, which was divided into various terraces, each lower than the other, till the last approached the water's edge. Sir Simon was well-born, the eldest of a family which consisted of two sons and a daughter. By the death of his father, about the year 1562, the knight succeeded to a noble patrimony in the North of England, and might likewise have succeeded to all the real importance and power of doing good which such domain was

calculated to give him in the country, had he not indulged through life the common inclination to shine in a different sphere; which noble ambition had established him, at some years beyond his grand climacteric, a battered old courtier; though of some reputation, it might be confessed, in that line.

The select circle had seen him tolerably well received by Elizabeth, from whom he had the distinction of knighthood, and no inconsiderable one either, during the reign of that princess, so remarkably frugal of her honours; and with her successor he was in such favour, that every one had already inquired what title he meant to take; for it was openly mentioned that his peerage was to be added to those with which the country was deluged during the earlier years of the then reigning king. His brother had been dead some time, he died a widower, leaving one son; but the only sister of Sir Simon was still living, a woman of high rank.

Between six and seven o'clock the tramp of horses was heard from the courtyard, and

much bustle pervaded the lower apartments, to the relief, as it is said, of the knight, whose after-dinner nap had been long exhausted, and whose reflections upon some late extraordinary promotions, and probable disgraces and changes at court, were beginning to flag. He was therefore gladly preparing himself for the appearance of a little army of domestics, who, with all the formality of the times, and consequence of his station, were expected to announce the arrival, when a youth in travelling attire entered the apartment without any formality at all. An exclamation of some surprise fell from Sir Simon, accompanied by a waving of the hand and slight embrace, which expressed a sense of habitual superiority, and an artificial address, that was sedulously to be kept up, though mixed with much real good humour and affection.

" So, young man, had it been a month hence I should have been less surprised to see you; though I have learnt from my sister,

—but of that hereafter—What! on horseback through the whole day without refreshment?"

"Why, not much, sir, it must be confessed."

"From whence to-day?"

"From a small distance to the southward of Waddesden."

Here a pause was produced in the discourse by the necessary orders given in consequence of the intelligence just communicated. The knight resumed:—

"There may, however, be no inconvenience in your return; his majesty has been graciously pleased to mention you, as I think, more than once; and the influence of my sister in another quarter seems greater than ever. Stand up, Hugh; look me in the face. Relations, perhaps, are partial to thee, boy; but hadst thou first been called into notice; had your uncle been on duty upon a certain occasion, instead of that peer of Scotland; hadst thou presented the device,—I know not but that your promotion, young man,

and the further advancement of an established English family, might possibly have caused less of heart-burning and jealousy."

" I really, sir, am not much disposed to lament the loss of such an opportunity: nay, you are angry, uncle, I see it plainly; consider how my early days were passed in a total seclusion, in rustic obscurity: what habits was I to have formed? neither my father nor myself were noticed by the most illustrious sovereign in the annals of England; neither of us received honours at her hands, or were deputed on missions of importance to the Court of Scotland."

There was something in the conclusion of these observations which dispelled the gathering cloud upon the courtier's countenance.

" Ay, lad," he replied, " unhappily the years between your birth and age of 18 cannot now be recalled: nor do I say that nothing was done in that time: the hardy exercises of the country were surely attended to: then, as your poor father was of the most learned of the Protestant ecclesiastics, you

were not without book knowledge, pure doctrine, and the noble feelings of the house of Mondomer: all these, indeed, my brother was well able to communicate. But what he could not give, I must. At the age of 21:—You are not yet 21, I think?"

"Within two months of it, sir."

"At the pliant age, I say, of 21, the knowledge of mankind that was wanting, may well be acquired. Your uncle, Hugh, has not been altogether without experience of the higher walks of life, nor perhaps without the capacity of making some observations upon them. Then my sister"—

"Is, indeed," said Hugh Mondomer, interrupting, "a most extraordinary personage: her consequence, I hear, is more than ever."

"Her talents must be great, or contrivance," observed the uncle, partly to himself, partly to Hugh: "such is her management with the world, that even I, the nearest relation she has, cannot quite comprehend her career. Sure it is that she has surmounted alarming

difficulties, and raised her establishment in life to the degree in which we see it."

"I have heard, uncle, that about three years ago she was in absolute distress, and could not support her rank."

"Let me recommend it to you, boy," said Sir Simon, "not to be too inquisitive as to your aunt: my sister is of more importance to your fortunes, I am loth to say it; but she may be more necessary to your advancement, than even myself. I own there is somewhat peculiar about her. Her conduct must not be inquired into, which yet appears irreproachable. This much you may learn, however, to prevent any mischief from future rash inquiries. With her late husband, the Lord de Lyle, she lived not happily. He was a weak and prodigal character. Upon the accession of his present majesty, he attended, indeed, the court, but was held in no estimation; and died, as you well know, in the winter of the year 1608. He died, as all supposed, (and it proved undoubtedly the case,) an utterly ruined man. Your relation, the Lady

de Lyle, had always procured for him the only consequence which could be attached to such a person; and it was reported, that she would retire from public life, upon a small provision allowed her by the crown; but to me she never expressed any such intention. What followed, I confess to you, it is not easy to explain. The rapid rise of Sir Robert Carre, (little as you have lived in the high circles,) you are thoroughly acquainted with. Now, most certain it is, that the fortunes of the Baroness de Lyle have kept exact pace with his; and I have the best grounds for knowing that she is not only in intimacy, but close confidence with my Lord Rochester, and that she has a great influence upon his mind and actions."

"Indeed!" quoth Hugh, who had been deeply attentive; "has she a good opinion, sir, of the Viscount Rochester?"

"Of what importance may that be to you? I again warn you seriously, Hugh, that no one except" *******

Here the conversation was stopped by the

entrance of old John Hannacott, a domestic of consequence in Sir Simon's establishment, who, with something between a bow and a nod, but of much cordiality, acquainted Master Hugh that his repast awaited him in another apartment; and his uncle intimated, by a gracious sign, that he was to avail himself of it.

Since Hugh Mondomer had entered on his 19th year, his education had devolved upon his uncle, to whose estates he was the presumptive heir, and by whom he was much loved, as he truly deserved to be. The first indispensable matter, as it was deemed by Sir Simon, had not been neglected. He had contrived to place Hugh twice within his sovereign's observation; and on one of those occasions he had so far attracted the notice of that weak monarch, (ever led away by personal advantages, in which young Mondomer was far from deficient,) that the circumstance of James's unlimited favour being at that time engrossed by a most undeserving minion, was generally thought an instance of

peculiar and provoking ill-fortune for the youth himself and all his connexions. The rest of Hugh himself, however, was little disturbed by courtly speculations and courtly disappointments. The life which he had led with a father whose memory was ever fondly cherished, had given his hopes and imagination a totally different turn; and with a mind, upon the whole, well regulated, and sound principles to resort to in the hour of trial, his expectations of future felicity were rather detached (perhaps too much so) from what is called the world, than inseparably connected with it. But, with whatever Hugh Mondomer's views of distant happiness might be associated, for the present he enjoyed as hearty a meal as we should have expected from the account that he lately gave of himself; conversing at intervals with John Hannacott, from whom he collected all that it was his object to know, of men and things in and about Sir Simon's dwelling. The ardour of eating and drinking was no sooner appeased, than our youth took a turn upon the terrace, to enjoy thoughts which

had long occupied his mind in a very considerable degree, and the interest of which his late visit in the north was not at all calculated to diminish. Leaving him, therefore, to expatiate at his comfort, it may be useful for us to inquire a little into the events of the last few days that had passed over his head; and to become, in some measure, acquainted with the friends whom he had recently quitted.

Sir Giles Harlande was the oldest, and, it is probable, the most valued friend of the Mondomer family; indeed it had been always held by both houses, that since the heptarchy, though at what period nobody was accurate, there had been a connexion in blood between them. At any rate, an affectionate intimacy was kept up; and, in truth, good actual service had been performed by Sir Giles in favour both of the father and uncle of Hugh Mondomer: for, careless and frequently dissipated as we fear the life of the courtier had been since the days of religious persecution were passed and gone, he had before that period, perhaps convinced by the reasoning, and

certainly animated by the example and fervent piety of his brother, shown, if not a knowledge of, at least a zeal for the reformed faith, which at that time was highly dangerous.

Early in the year 1558, a friendly intimation was given to the father of the two lads, the eldest being in that year only 17, that his sons had been for some time in the habit of talking very freely upon matters connected with religion, and it was suggested that it might not be an unadvisable measure to remove them from home during the visitation of the queen's commissioners upon those parts, which was fixed for the following week. The young men were accordingly sent to Belton Hall, Sir Giles Harlande's seat on the extreme northern border of Cumberland: and it was well they were; for certain very intelligible hints (prompted either by duty or malice) had been given to the commissioners, which were thought peculiarly applicable to the two youths. Something about neglecting to hear mass, or to go in processions, with allusions to the reading and distribution of

heretical books. Such was the terror inspired by these ministers of an odious government, that from some of the domestics of the mansion they easily discovered what steps had been taken in the business, and the commissioners, in consequence, set their faces towards Belton, and to Belton they came. Sir Giles, at that time very young, not of age indeed, and himself a favourer of the new doctrines, boldly denied them admittance; and upon the return of the officers, after some interval, with an additional force, it was discovered that the birds were flown, and had sheltered themselves in Scotland. Vengeance was bitterly vowed, and would unquestionably have been exhausted to the dregs upon the whole house of Harlande, but for the event of the 17th of the following November, which released the nation from the misgovernment of the unhappy Mary. Since those days the alliance between the families had been anxiously preserved, notwithstanding the total difference of habits that prevailed between the heads of each. Sir Giles was a thorough

gentleman of the country; his family ancient, though not very opulent. He had survived his lady, whom he married rather late in life, and by whom he had three daughters. The knight rarely quitted his paternal seat; and the metropolis, with the frivolities and intrigues of James's court, was of all situations the least to his taste for a residence of any duration. To one of his daughters, however, that resort of all the aspiring folly of the time was not entirely unknown. She had resided for some months in the city of Westminster, at the mansion of the Baroness de Lyle, which personage of distinction, though for a long period she had seen little or nothing of Sir Giles and his family, never ceased to express towards them all the consideration due to an established connexion between houses of importance.

Since the death of Hugh's father, it had sometimes been inconvenient and unsuitable to the other projects of Sir Simon to have the young man resident with him. Those periods, therefore, (for he had never made

part of his aunt's family,) young Mondomer was used to pass at Belton Hall: and it must be admitted that the happiest days he had known were associated with that spot. The domestics from highest to lowest were fond of him for his easy unaffected temper; and to Sir Giles he was ever acceptable for variety of reasons;—from the ancient regard to his family; then, his own knowledge of the youth from his cradle upwards; and, above all, from the constantly cheerful and exhilarating spirits produced by a lively imagination, and that strong susceptibility to enjoyment, which made the old gentleman live through all the best days of his youth over again in Hugh's conversation.

But we are not to attribute the unfailing delight which Mondomer experienced at Belton solely to imagination. He enjoyed health, activity, and a mind far from uncultivated.

Heavily, indeed, did the old knight grumble and complain of him for the hours devoted to his books; for *his* they were with the utmost propriety to be called, as Sir Giles's

own library, if any apartment in the old house went by that name, was not better stocked than those belonging to other country gentlemen of the age. One apartment in the mansion was however devoted to Hugh, and that he had furnished with all the learning of his late father's collection. It was from one of his accustomed visits to Belton that he returned (as we have seen) rather unexpectedly to his uncle. The dinner had been served at mid-day as usual, and at about four in the afternoon he was preparing to accompany the young ladies of the family in a walk through the immediate neighbourhood; when Sir Giles came into the room, with an air somewhat disturbed, and desired to speak with Hugh in particular.

"My dear boy," said the knight, when they were alone, "may be there's a delicacy or propriety, or this thing and 'tother, about some people, which, as to what I have to say, I think best to tell thee in a fair and manly way."

Poor Sir Giles's diction was not remark-

able for perspicuity at any time, and certainly not made the more distinct by the visible agitation under which he then laboured.

"Here's a messenger from the Lady de Lyle, your aunt, and all about her suspicions. Now I was thinking, Master Hugh, that my honour as well as friendship thee'st had some experience of; and with regard to affections being engaged, why you've all been bred up like children of a family: but I shall do my duty if we are to part."

The remainder of this speech was even less clear than the beginning; but it certainly seemed to Hugh to conclude with a reluctant intimation that he should quit Belton Hall for the present: nor, to say the truth, was the first part of it so absolutely unintelligible, but that it made him alternately scarlet and pale as ashes. He waited to hear more.

"And after all," the old gentleman proceeded, "the girls just think of thee alike, for any thing I see:" he did not, however, see very clearly in that particular: "but take

her letter, 'tis the fair, open way of acting: read it, lad, read it thyself."

The epistle, duly, formally, and fully directed, was accordingly drawn from the black case of many folds in which it had travelled between three and four hundred miles, and with an anxious heart Hugh Mondomer went through it.

"WORTHY SIR GILES,

"THE family of Mondomer are, out of all doubt, well observing of your constant kindness by young Hugh; indeed there has been ever the most disinterested affection amongst us all; insomuch that the welfare of the one house has been always equally dear to the other, on both sides. I shall therefore consider it to need no apology if I inform you of the views of his relations for my nephew, who has been produced at court, and may, it is not unlikely, be established there.

"I may not conceal it from you, Sir Giles, that in such case he should by no means, at his years, think of any person, of whatever merit, in the way of marriage, — which step might tend to confine his fair prospects. When-

ever my nephew shall marry, his majesty himself will deign to direct it, and dispose, as to him shall seem best, of the heir to so great possessions. Now it is not unknown to me, worthy Sir Giles, that the young man has encouraged a boyish fondness for your eldest daughter, whom I well know, and for whom I entertain the high regard due to her virtue and excellent qualities. Would it not be more fitting, my valued friend, that the young people should see less of each other? These fancies may produce a real discomfort to themselves, and much inconvenient trouble to their parents and friends. I have, and ever shall, all care and concern in the welfare of yourself and daughters: and so end. Good Sir Giles,

"Yours faithful 'till death,

"MARY DE LYLE."

Upon finishing the letter, Hugh Mondomer, with the warmth of youth and impulse of a very affectionate heart, declared without hesitation that his aunt's information, however she came by it, was well founded, wrung the old knight's hand, and expressed, with the ardour and ready flowing language of

a lover, his disposition—his eagerness—to abandon all schemes of worldly interest and advancement, in favour of the object beloved.

These resolutions were, of course, combated by Sir Giles, whose pride was touched to the quick by the baroness's communication: and it was at length agreed, or rather insisted upon, by one party, and reluctantly acquiesced in by the other, that Hugh should for that time at least shorten his stay at Belton, and indeed set out for his uncle's on the following morning; and on the other hand, Sir Giles was to form no unalterable determination, say nothing on the subject to the daughter in question, and, above all, he was to avoid gratifying the Lady de Lyle by any promise, or explanation, conformable to her wishes. That last stipulation was discreetly thrown in, as it accorded extremely well with the knight's feelings, which largely partook of mortification and disgust at the tone of her address to him.

CHAPTER II.

THOSE points being settled which we have related, our youth hurried through the quadrangular court, and gaining the park, overtook the ladies on the side of a hill half-covered with wood, and commanding a prospect of the western mountains of Cumberland, over a considerable extent of valley, agreeably diversified with streams, hamlets, and land in different stages of culture.

"What! come at last!" exclaimed Elinor, the youngest of the three: "we have not waited for you much beyond three quarters of an hour. And how might your dignity guess that we had chosen this way?"

"I thought," observed Blanche, "that he did not mean to come at all." This was accompanied by a smile.

"Your father had a letter to show me," said Mondomer, with a tone and manner so

different from his usual good spirits, that sundry urgent questions, concerning this letter, were put to him without delay.

" I hardly know—I doubt—indeed your father made me promise not to tell what it was about; but it is far from agreeable to me, and obliges me immediately to return to my uncle."

" Immediately! you jest," said Elinor.

" He does not look as if he jested," observed Margaret.

" Surely, Hugh, you may at least tell us who the letter is from," said the eldest. " But it must be from Sir Simon; no one else could order you away. What can they want with you? unless, indeed, you choose to go."

" Do not vex me, Blanche," he replied; " you are far from thinking so, and I am really troubled."

They walked on some paces without any observation being made.—" How happens it, Blanche, that I have heard so few particulars of my relation, the Lady de Lyle, from you, who were long with her, residing as part of her family, and that very lately?"

Blanche answered quickly—"You do not mean to tell me that the baroness is the cause of your now leaving us?"

"She undoubtedly wrote the letter that I have been speaking of."

"What is her pleasure will probably be done," said she. "Why, she seldom spoke of you when I was with her: never to me, but the day before my departure."

"And what might she say on that occasion?"

"She rather asked questions of me than made any observations herself, and fixed her eyes, as if she would have dived into my thoughts. But the baroness was not unkind to me: I believe I ought to love her better."

"What's that?" cried Elinor, turning to the wood, where a sudden rustling was heard, in the direction close to the party. "Did you see nothing, sisters?"

"If we had looked out sharper," said Hugh, "we might have seen a rabbit perhaps: it might even have been a fox. And what did you see?"

" The shadow of something, as I thought; but it did not look like a rabbit."

" That child," said Margaret, " has seen nothing for some months to satisfy her passion for wonders; and since that wretch, Joan Gothlyn, died, we have not even had a witch in this neighbourhood."

" I have heard, Margaret," observed the youngest, " that people have sometimes been put to death for witchcraft, when it was not absolutely sure that they had committed it. But Joan was a witch."

" Oh, she certainly was," said Margaret; " Ralph Ambrose and old Barnard Cotsworth, (I don't mean the father, but the uncle, who's older still,) saw her in the midst of her horrid, wicked deeds: she laughed them to scorn, and dared them to touch her. Barnard would have dragged her away, and brought her before Justice Falconer; but Ralph said, it was best not to lay hands upon her till broad daylight. And best it turned out to be, as to them, for her familiar spirit met them as they were returning, just by

Armswellan's hut, and said something which had nearly——"

"No, no," cried Elinor, "Marion Ambrose, Ralph's sister, told me the whole; it was twilight, and the clouds to the eastward just began to look red, when they saw it coming; not on the heath by the hut, but in the wood. The figure met them, and passed them, and then, without ever repassing, it met them again about a quarter of a mile further on. It never spoke; no, they were terrified enough without that, for they soon afterwards saw the same object walking on the tops of the trees."

By this time they had all completely entered the wood on the side of the hill; and Mondomer having offered Blanche his arm, those two were separated from the others, and during the inquiry into the crimes of old Joan Gothlyn, their conversation, which had been interrupted, was considerably advanced.

"Nor did I," said Hugh, "ever consider her as a woman of a cheerful turn; that word always seemed to sound too frivolous

for her character. But I should not have pronounced her a decidedly unhappy woman. Were you long there before this struck you?"

"It might be six weeks, or seven. I then learnt that she had other intimates besides the persons of rank and consequence with whom I daily saw her; and in particular that there was a poor family, or some distressed person, to whom she was a benefactress, as they told me, who lived over the water, at a place they called Lambeth. Do you know, Hugh, that the Archbishop of all England has a fine—"

"I do, my dear Blanche; I remember it perfectly well: go on about the Lady de Lyle, if you please."

"Why, you must know, I had soon occasion to take notice, that whatever point of consequence she might have carried before, or whatever scheme of grand amusement she was preparing for, after these visits across the water she always seemed uneasy and dejected. Now you must observe——"

"Stop! who goes there?" cried Mondo-

mer; "who passed just then, in the underwood to the left?"

"One of my sisters, I suppose," replied she: "unless you absolutely touch people, you can never keep them in sight for a minute together in these narrow, crooked paths. But as I was telling you, the custom of the house was, that by ten o'clock, or near upon it, all lights should be regularly extinguished, and, from the baroness to the lowest servant, every body was to be in bed. One night, (whether it was night or the following morning though I cannot say, but it was totally dark and still), I happened to be awake, and thought I heard a footstep upon the great staircase, which astonished me rather; and to be sure of it, I sat up, and then there was no doubt in the world that a light footstep was moving in the gallery, and the flash of a lamp shone for an instant under my door. I listened for some time, and then fell asleep. Now it is often the case that one wakes two nights running in the same irregular kind of way; and so it was with me: and I do

assure you, that the very same thing happened again. Catherine, your aunt's principal woman, lay in the apartment with me, and I could hardly prevail upon myself to let her sleep quietly out the remainder of the night; but lost not a moment in the morning to tell her what I had heard during two successive nights. She first would have persuaded me that I had been dreaming; then, she was averse to talk about it, and answered cross and short; and I had desisted from the subject, when she suddenly warned me to make no mention of it to her lady. 'Mark me, young Mistress Harlande,' added she, 'none like to have their misfortunes published; and it is enough to tell you that my lady is afflicted with fits, what they call delirious, and walks in her sleep.'"

"That is a very dangerous infirmity," said Hugh: "did no one watch her of a night?"

"I have reason to think that no one was intended to watch her. Oh, Hugh! I fear I was very blameable and inquisitive; but do you know, there is ground to suppose that

she never was in her sleep when she walked of a night."

"Indeed! but how could you judge of that? I have always heard that the appearance of the eyes staring open—"

"Nay, nay, listen to me, Hugh: Catherine afterwards was absent for several days in the country, and during that time I remained alone in the apartment. On one of those nights, I think the third, I had some work to finish, and remained working by my lamp for a good while after the family had retired: there was more difficulty about it than I expected; and I had to unseam from the very—"

"Well; but, my dear Blanche, it kept you up very late however."

"Yes, the clock had gone midnight for, I am confident, more than half an hour, when I heard the sound of somebody walking gently, just as before. Now I am afraid there was much of curiosity in it; but I assure you that I was also anxious to watch her for her own safety; for only imagine it—she went,

the sound of her steps was quite distinct, she went—strait up the tower where nobody sleeps."

"You forget," said the other, "that my aunt's dwelling house is better known to you than to me: which tower do you speak of? I only remember one, that hangs over the street; it seems to be as high above the top of the rest of the building, as from that top to the ground."

"That is the tower I mean; and on hearing the footsteps move in that direction, I followed softly, led by the last gleam of her lamp. I was nearly up all the steps, and doubted whether I should go back and call for assistance; for I thought she might, in all probability, throw herself headlong from the tower. At that moment I heard her voice distinctly, and by gently moving up two or three steps at a time, just saw her enter the chamber, the highest I mean, and the door shut to after her, suddenly, and with violence. I assure you she was quite dressed, as much as ever in the day-time."

"This is strange enough: you scarcely dared to follow her, I presume. Proceed, Blanche."

"I could not then help listening, and soon heard her speak; sometimes it was clear that she was talking English, though I could not tell the exact words. Then she spoke in a foreign tongue—not French, however; and after that it seemed as if she was praying in strange language. Then something came across my mind, which made me terribly frightened!"

"What was that?" said Hugh.

"I thought of the stories that Mistress Simcox, the curate's wife, was used to tell us; and all at once a clap of thunder shook the whole house, from one end to the other! I felt faint, and leant against the wall, and every thing seemed to swim, and so, perhaps, what I heard afterwards might be partly fancy."

"Perhaps so. Oh, yes—fancy, certainly. Well, what was it? what did you hear?"

"I thought," said Blanche, shuddering and looking round; "I thought, that I after-

wards heard two voices in the room. But it was all fear and imagination of course: most likely no such thing ever happened. You know it could not: could it? Never mention this, Hugh."

"What became of you?" said Mondomer.

"When a little recovered, I crawled down the tower stairs; and as I had left my door open, the light of the lamp was seen all over the gallery, and I got easily into my chamber again."

After this, a silence of some minutes was broken by Hugh's observation, that Mistress Simcox was a pious woman, and what she told might be depended upon. "But," added he, "that always related to the lowest of the human race, who were driven by want and misery to such hateful —— and it thunders as often by night as by day. However, this is an extraordinary tale."

By a turn into a straiter and wider path, they at this time came in sight of Margaret and Elinor; and on rejoining them, the whole party agreed that it was well time to return.

Little was said during the remainder of the walk: the thoughts of Hugh's approaching departure, which had been suspended during a narrative that extremely interested them, now threw a cloud over his spirits, and those of Blanche; nor had it any tendency to exhilarate the others. They returned to Belton by a different route from that which they had set out by, chiefly through the wood, from whence they did not emerge till they were close upon the old mansion; to the very gates of which, the ground was suffered to remain in a rough and uncultivated state. The family, when alone, were not apt to sit in the great saloon that opened into the hall, the floor of which, constantly kept in order for display, shone like ebony; while the strait-backed lofty chairs, apparently contrived, and by no means ill-contrived, for instruments of torture; and tapestry hangings, representing, in gigantic stature, the misfortune of John of France, and dignified courtesy of his conqueror; all gave token of the principal apartment, to be used only on grand occasions.

The present evening was passed, as were all those of a quiet description, in a small square room, littered with gloves, hats, pincushions, &c. of the young ladies, and whips and spurs of the old knight's. It was not remarkably well lighted by one casement window, but rendered as cheerful as a thick coat of the darkest green paint, unmercifully laid on all round the wainscot, could make it. Those, however, who were now assembled there had known many happy hours in it, and were magnanimously determined not only to strive against all drooping melancholy feelings, but, if possible, to be absolutely cheerful during the last night of Hugh's stay, and in spite of that circumstance; though we never could learn, whether such resolution was the consequence of their own happy tempers, and the hilarity natural to their time of life; or whether it was produced by a speech which Sir Giles delivered on coming in among them, in which he touched upon things not going in this world precisely as we would have them; and upon those persons being best

able to bear disappointment who were best prepared —— and so forth.

The two youngest girls, of whom Margaret was not quite eighteen, and Elinor nearly two years younger, were soon seated and engaged; now deeply thoughtful, now squabbling, and now laughing, at a game where four white pegs upon a board had, with a superior latitude of powers, to defend a certain space against treble the number of black ones. And the old gentleman, having perceived that he was likely to gain little of the others' attention, whilst Blanche worked at her sampler, and Hugh hung over her with looks of ardent affection, and occasional observations, which most distinctly partook of that feeling; demanded his favourite tune.

The instrument, by means of which he was to be gratified, though dignified by the name of the virginals, was in reality the short, three-cornered spinnet of that age, with its scanty row of jet black keys. Tone—we of the nineteenth century can never suppose that it possessed; but it is reported to have

been tolerably in tune, and Blanche had received all the instruction which was to be attained by young ladies of her description; and what was more to the purpose, nature had given her an accurate ear and exquisite enjoyment of music.

The lute, indeed, on which she had made considerable progress, was more to her taste, as an accompaniment for the voice; and Mondomer agreed with her. But upon that point Sir Giles begged leave to differ; and to say the truth, the clatter of the virginals much better suited that particular jig which the knight had exalted as his favourite. After he had been indulged to the utmost, his daughter, at Hugh's request, played several of the delicious airs of their northern neighbours, which had found their way to Carlisle and its vicinity: nor were those omitted with which Rizzio had, not long before, improved the Scottish music; if, indeed, he did not entirely lay the foundation of that species of melody, of so peculiar a character, so universally popular, and so certain to

remain popular as long as this island shall exist.

At nine the great bell in the tower was rung out for an exact quarter of an hour, a custom deduced from the curfew, and the whole party repaired to the hall, where supper was laid out.

Sir Giles turned, and spoke to a servant for some time; but of their conference only the last part was audible.

"Perhaps though, Joseph, one would not fail, as all fit respect and hospitality was always shown at Belton; if, indeed, he be no common messenger.

"That he is not, your worship," said the man, "as any one may tell."

"How? by his appearance?"

"Appearance, your honour! why he is a little, dirty-looking, ill-favoured old man."

"By what then?" said Sir Giles.

"Oh! bless you, sir! by his glum, sulky manner. Why he boasts to be quite familiar with his lady. Says I; 'My friend, Tom will take care of your horse, and you may sit

in my snug room; for your mistress, I know is a great friend——' 'My mistress!' says he, all quick and proud like, and his little red eyes twinkling: 'take notice man——' "

"Nay, we shall never have an end of all this," interrupted Sir Giles: and Mondomer, who had listened to the latter part of the dialogue, intimated that perhaps so sullen a being had better be left to himself.

"Why for that matter, Hugh," said the old gentleman, "it is always my way to let oneself down, or the chance of it, rather than act unhospitable. Now, for a person to leave Belton in neglect, who ought to have some courtesy shown him—No, no; Joseph, you may let him know, that supper's served, and I expect him in to sit down with us."

Joseph left the hall to deliver his message, and the rest took their places.

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE or nothing was said during supper, except now and then from Sir Giles.

"This fellow; is he coming, I wonder? Pledge thee, lad: if he be'nt here soon, he'd better stay away altogether, I trow."

Joseph re-entered.

"How now, Joseph! he should have been brought in ten minutes ago."

"But, please your worship, he won't come at all. He says he shall leave the place before day-break, and must have his repose."

A short exclamation, meant to express contempt and unconcern, but which those who heard it thought savoured more of offended dignity, was all the reply made to that information. The cloth was now removed, and after a long grace pronounced by the knight with a solemn voice, and action, awkward, perhaps, but indicative of real devotion; a goblet of strong beer, of the very clearest

and most tremendous quality, was placed before him, and another containing some sort of mixed beverage, before Hugh.

"I wish," said Margaret to the latter, "as you pass through Carlisle to-morrow, you would tell Dame Greigson that the blue worsted won't do at all; and as for the grey, to remember that Tom will be at Saunders's on Friday between eleven and one: she'll know what you mean."

"Then she will be far wiser than myself, Margaret: however, the message shall certainly be given."

"We shall be dull without you," observed Elinor; "you can't think, Hugh, what a difference it will make, in our walks especially, and in the evenings: won't it, Blanche?"

Now we are well aware that, according to rule, Blanche should have been embarrassed, blushed, and looked on the ground:—she did neither, however, but readily assented, though with something very like a sigh.

"If we part without any quarrel," continued Elinor, "perhaps you will write me

one very long letter, and tell me all you have seen at London, and about the diversions and stage plays."

"Stage plays, quoth the girl? Hey?" said her father, "what thee wilt not learn mischief soon enough without vanities of that kind! and yet I, in my time, perhaps—— a little about them doings.—What dost think, Hugh?"

"Indeed, sir, I did not know that you had ever been a frequenter of the theatre."

"Why, lad, when I was last up at London I'd enough of it. Didst ever hear of Will Shakespeare, of Warwickshire, the poet-player man?"

"I think I have, sir," answered Hugh; "but somebody told me he was getting more famous for his writings than his acting.—Was it not in the year before last that you were in London?"

"Let's see; the year 9; ay, that was it,—the same year was brought over from foreign parts many million of mulberry trees."

"That's a great number, Sir Giles."

" 'Twas wanted, I tell thee, for the new manufacturers, and the king's worms, and this thing, and t'other; well, who should I meet but Will! I know'd his mother long before she married the wool-dealer; the daughter she was of my old friend, Robin Arden. He was a wild one, Will, but gentle to talk to; little thought I of him for an author, and ordered too by the late queen to make a character, or a play, or alter something or other for her majesty's own fancy."

" I suppose, sir," said Hugh, " his way of life was not very like your's there.—You, I imagine, must have been introduced at the court?"

" Who, I? No, Master Hugh, leave all that for your uncle Sir Simon, my lord, as is to be; besides, King James is but churlish to us gentlemen of the country. I was all among the wits."

Mondomer could not repress a smile, and the old gentleman proceeded:—

" Oh! my dear boy, such a good hearty creature as Will, so glad to see an old friend;

ay, and humble quite in his manners, and so thankful for one's courtesy towards him, and not taking a pride to talk, as some on 'em do, with pursed up mouth, and new-fangled words, and about matters too deep for a common man; and then nobody so ready to be pleased when one happened to say any thing droll or clever oneself:—'tis thousand pities, now he's famous for some of his writings, that he should have took up such an unreputable trade as a player."

"It is to be lamented, perhaps," said Hugh: "I have heard him spoken of as a fine fellow of genius, but that he will never be very famous, because he wants learning."

"As to that, my boy, I'll tell thee what; there was I passed a night with a company of learned authors and them sort of wits, at a tavern; I forget the name, the Stag's Head, or Bull's head, or somewhat of that, not far from the river; there was Sir John Suckling, and one of the name of Porter, and Ben Jonson, and Shakespeare, and Burbage, the players, and two more, whose names I don't

call to mind. So they all got disputing. Ben Jonson, he was roaring about the ancients, and the Greeks, and the classicals; 'and,' quoth he, 'we are disgraced not only about the unisons,' I think he called it, 'and every kind of incorrect writing, but likewise by strange monsters, and improbable fancies; and there is such a lack of learning,' says he, 'among those that are favourites with the public, that as for the English stage, you may scarcely make it worse.'—'Without making it better, perhaps,' says Will, good-humouredly; 'but, in faith, Master Jonson, those who know nothing about the ancients can steal nothing from them.' And afterwards one of the company said to Ben, that if he would give us a fine thing from his Romans and Latins, the other would be bound to give us something about the same matter, and quite as fine, from the writings of Shakespeare. That was a rare evening; we did'nt break up till after midnight."

"I think, father," said Blanche, "my sister Elinor will be for closing the present

sitting somewhat earlier; wherever she fixes her eyes, I for some time have observed, that they do not remain open half a minute together."

This imputation of drowsiness Elinor vehemently deprecated, admitting, at the same time, her having taken so much exercise that day, that it would be no wonder if she had really been sleepy; and the party soon separated.

Belton Hall was a quadrangular mansion, as has been intimated, the northern side of which consisted of offices, and the other three were occupied by the family and frequent visitors. Hugh slept at the western end of the south gallery; so near to the end, as to be the last chamber on that side, except one small and meanly-furnished room. Before he prepared to get into bed, he gave a range to his thoughts. This letter from his aunt—how totally unexpected! She had no paramount claim upon his regard: she had been less to him than any other relation. Why should she desire to cross the beloved object of his heart? to destroy all of felicity that on this earth he looked forward to? Was it

ambition? Yes, it must be so; to see her family aggrandized, that was cause enough. Then came to his aid a sanguine temper and spirit of indignation at her interference. Whatever she might plot upon the subject, she never—no, she never should or could succeed. His mind was then at rest for the time; so much so, that the image of Blanche was admitted, without the intervention of any unpleasant thought. Her delightful figure, her exquisitely sweet expression of countenance; her good sense, firm principles, and honest, open, affectionate heart. Nothing, (he settled within his own mind,) could ever spoil Blanche; no courtly life would be capable of corrupting so innocent, yet so prudent a disposition; and indeed she had seen something of ——. Here Hugh almost started: the recollection of what she had told him, respecting her visit, flashed across his mind, and he was utterly absorbed in unpleasant meditation, when he heard some one speaking in, what he thought, a remarkable manner; first in accents of expostulation,

somewhat angry; then decidedly moaning. He listened attentively: the voice seemed to proceed from the small chamber beyond his; there was no doubt of that. Soon, all was still. He was aware that the apartment had been usually occupied by Joseph Hart, the butler. Was it Joseph's voice? Oh, it must be: he was dreaming; and Hugh soon settled that a man's mode of talking in a dream must necessarily differ much from his common tone.

"He's fast now," said Mondomer, as he began to undress. But the sound again returned: it was not the voice of Joseph! and Hugh was struck with momentary dismay, by a sort of frightful howl, as from one in agony. He seized his lamp, and burst into the adjoining chamber.

There was a low bed, but nobody in it: on the foot, however, sat a short figure, with his back to the door.

He turned suddenly, upon the appearance of the light, and Mondomer thought he never

had seen so ghastly a countenance. They looked at each other for some moments.

"I expected," said Hugh, "that Joseph might have been here: who may you be?"

To this no answer was returned; but the man made signs that Hugh should quit the apartment.

"Are you not ill? I heard a groaning, and came to offer assistance."

"None is required," said the figure. "Leave me to myself: begone!"

Hugh was astonished. "It is far from my wish to intrude," said he; "but are not you the person who arrived with a letter?"

"I am; you will do well to attend to it. But I have nothing to say further, and wish not to be disturbed."

"I should not have disturbed you, but from a desire to be of service. You know what I must have heard; moreover, you want a light. There is no lamp that I see in your chamber; you must have been sitting up in total darkness."

" Repress your curiosity; it may lead to evil."

" Old man," replied Mondomer, who had now thoroughly surveyed the object before him with the light in his hand, " your answers are ungentle: curiosity was no motive for my appearance here."

" No! nor for your indiscreet inquiries elsewhere, I presume. Mark me! the character of the Lady de Lyle is of value to more than herself: warn others not to mix her name with their idle tales."

The blood rushed into Hugh's cheeks. At the first moment he thought of insisting peremptorily upon the other's explaining all he knew, and of compelling him, even by violence, to tell by whom his own conversation in the afternoon had been overheard. Then motives of prudence had weight; and the figure before him was not such a one as to justify him in the use of threats—an apparently decrepid old man. After a silence of some embarrassment; " I will not risk disturbing the family at this hour," said he,

"by pressing inquiries, which you might dispute about answering."

The old man grinned with a most malignant expression. "You are going then: be it so—leave me as you found me, and heed not what you have heard; there may be misery and anguish which you cannot relieve."

Mondomer retired to his own apartment, where he was long kept awake by perplexing and agitating reflections.

At a very early hour, on the following morning, Blanche, who had likewise slept but indifferently, thought it might possibly be conducive to her benefit to take a walk in the valley along a path which wound by the side of a broad but clear and shallow rivulet, not far from the foot of the rising ground on which Belton stood. Now whether it fell out by accident, or design, we have never been able to discover: but certain it is, that young Mondomer had a fancy for the very same path, and met her; or, as some say, overtook her, nearly two hours before the mighty and substantial breakfast, of itself

sufficiently early as we should now deem it, was duly displayed in Sir Giles's great hall. What they talked of does not exactly appear: a good deal, it is said, was explained by Hugh as to his present situation and difficulties, but without ever admitting the possibility of her father being made a party to them; and then his ulterior hopes and resolutions were expressed with such spirit, such sincerity, such fervency of affection, as to draw from that good and charming girl admissions, in the first instance, of more anxiety than perhaps she would have given in to if any one else had been present; and afterwards into certain direct avowals of tenderness, which had never been communicated before, but by every possible language except that of the tongue. On their return, it might have been observed, though we never heard it was, that both their eyes looked particularly red; but it could hardly have been collected from any signs, or the demeanour of either, that they were unhappy, or displeased with each other. Indeed the very

contrary might have been plausibly assumed by an accurate observer, notwithstanding that they talked but little to each other, and not much to any body else, during breakfast; and Blanche had retired before the moment of Hugh's departure arrived.

The old knight, however, hugged and embraced him, shook both his hands forty times, and, for the opportunity of doing so forty times more, attended him to the court, where the horses were waiting with Mondomer's man.

"Give them a good bait at Carlisle, Ned," said Sir Giles; "and send Watford back from Penrith to-morrow, with Master Hugh's horse and your own; after that, my dear boy, thee'lt get fair nags for riding post all the way to London."

Hugh had taken the wrong whip, and in going back to change it, met Elinor.

"God bless you, Hugh!" said she; "I do believe you are most sorry to leave me, next to Blanche."

"I am heartily sorry to leave you all, my dear Elinor," replied Hugh, kissing her.

"Oh! but of course most for Blanche: and well you may, for she loves you very dearly."

Hugh hastily turned away; then, after a much heartier kiss than the first, he was soón well advanced upon the road to Carlisle. Mondomer rode on for a long time, occupied by his own thoughts, which were at first sufficiently painful. But his gloom was no match for a gloriously fine day, and a gloriously fine ordinary state of spirits; and at length he became pretty much as usual; that is to say, as comfortably cheerful as might be wished.

About the middle of the day, Ned clapped spurs to his horse, and came nearly abreast of his master.

"Does your honour mean to keep to the west, by Wigan, Warrington, and so?"

"No; we must edge round to the Midland, and be at Coventry by Wednesday

afternoon, at the latest. I wonder when that fellow went from Belton; or whether he is gone?"

"What fellow, sir?" said Ned; who, having obtained an answer to all that he wanted, had resumed his own train of meditation.

"He, I mean, who brought a letter the day before ——."

"Lord bless you, sir! he was off long before you—before daylight almost. He's a queer hand—that. Tom was up first of any body, as he thought. You know, your honour, Tom's work; he's not only the stable to do, and the greyhounds to take out, but ——."

"Did Tom," interrupted Mondomer, "find that decrepid old figure about, at the time you mention?"

"Indeed did he, your honour; and he'd got his horse out, and had dressed him, and saddled him. And says Tom, 'Who might have opened the stable door for you, my man?' And not one word says the other, but mounts,

as light as any cavalier of your age, sir, and away he was, at a round trot, that soon became a gallop."

"He did, did he?" said Mondomer, after some pause. "What kind of a horse?"

"Oh, a roan; a great, high, sharp-boned brute, your honour; but Tom says trotted out tolerable."

"Then who did open the stable for him, Ned? I suppose it was never locked."

"Tom swears the contrary, sir, the last thing before he went to bed; and he was all flurried, and I don't know how, but could not stop the old fellow. And he thought that may be something was stolen out of the stable; but nothing was."

They again proceeded in silence, and soon were within sight of the town where they were to stop for refreshment. Now, as far as we have been informed, nothing of importance occurred during the remainder of the journey, and young Mondomer arrived at his uncle's in the manner that has been already related.

CHAPTER IV.

On the morning after Hugh had rejoined his uncle, the young man was eager to set his mind at rest, and perform his stipulation by Sir Giles Harlande; the spirit of which, if not the letter, Hugh honestly conceived to require a speedy explanation with his guardian. He therefore introduced the subject of his unexpected appearance the night before. Here, however, he was made to discover, if he had not learnt it already, that there is nothing on this earth in which we are more frequently deceived, than the expectation of being able (without shocking our own delicacy by talking at once upon the point) to bring on an explanation which we may have much at heart, either by a sudden introduction of some topic which might seem naturally to lead to that explanation, or by diverting other conversation into that particular channel, with whatever dexterity.

All Hugh's indirect attempts to make a confident of his uncle upon the subject of his attachment at Belton were utterly fruitless. First, the courtier was glad that he had left the north at that particular time, for many good reasons: then the mention of his sister's letter led to the avowal that he had heard something of that communication, but did not precisely know what was the substance of it: then, that he did not wish to know, but supposed that the Lady de Lyle had some project in agitation for Hugh's advantage, and nobody living could be more qualified to carry it into execution.

"You are not to imagine, my dear nephew, because circumstances have hitherto less apparently connected you with my sister than so near a relationship might seem to warrant, that she has not your interest equally at heart with myself; indeed she has never failed in her anxiety for you, from the very moment of my poor brother's death."

"If every act of her interference, sir," said Hugh, "is to be as ill-timed as her first——."

"You are not sorry to return to me, Hugh, I suppose?"

"Sorry, sir! far from it; the staying with you is the only thing that could have reconciled me to being dragged away with so little ceremony from Belton. You do not doubt, uncle, my love and gratitude to you; and a person of your penetration can as little doubt that ten thousand circumstances must attach me most tenderly to Sir Giles Harlande's family, from whom I have ever experienced such regard, and with whom I have been (I must say) so very, very happy."

"To be sure you have," said Sir Simon; "and you never can, or ought to forget my old friend's civilities."

"Civility, sir, sounds cold to my ear.—I may talk freely to you, my dear sir, as to the chief friend I have in the world, as to a second father, and own to you that I love most dearly every thing about the place."

"And I should be very much surprised if you did not," answered the politician; "indeed I should think it a reflection upon

the qualities of your heart. Full well do I know the impression made upon youthful minds by the scenes where they have early been treated with tenderness and indulgence; where the study has been to give them, if possible, nothing but pure gratification, without mixture of that alloy which in the more bustling scenes of life must be counted upon. — I perfectly comprehend all that could be said on those subjects, Hugh, if you were to talk for four hours. Then to a youth who indulges his imagination (as you do by many degrees too much), the very situation and appearance of Belton Hall has a character of interest. — Oh! yes, yes; but since the first days of our first parents, for they could not long hold it, no person has been permitted to pass his whole time in rural seclusion, however delightful or innocent might have been the course of life which he had laid down for himself. And it will be necessary for you, my dear boy, to get rid of many false and flighty notions, and exert yourself

as a man, to obtain that consideration in society which your birth and prospects entitle you to."

"Inexperienced and ignorant as I may be, sir," said Hugh, almost peevishly, "I never did imagine that I was to spend my life at Belton, or the greater part of it: — but surely, whatever becomes of me, it is natural that I should ever think of that family as most to me of any persons in the world, except your own self. Now, my good uncle, what new acquaintance can I, ought I to feel such affection for, as for — that is to say — all the three daughters of Sir Giles?"

"Precisely the way," said Sir Simon, "in which the thing has always struck me. Hugh Mondomer (I have been used to say to my friends) has no brothers or sisters of his own, and till he is of fit age, and in circumstances to marry, which you are not yet, Hugh, as your friends are decidedly of opinion, nothing could be more fortunate than his enjoying the society of amiable young women,

which always softens the manners — with whom he has been brought up from childhood, to whom he is more than a common relation, an absolute brother, and so considered by the whole family."

Here a domestic entered and said something to his uncle, which Hugh did not distinctly hear; but the effect of the communication soon appeared in the sudden unfolding of the double doors; and other servants coming forward, arranged themselves in parallel lines, between which marched a visitor, with an air that by no means betokened diffidence, ignorance of the world, want of the proper sense of dignity that a man owes to himself, or any pitiful failing of that description.

The stranger at first appeared to young Mondomer, from the easy flow and splendid fashion of his attire, to be a man of little more than his own time of life, till, on closer inspection, various lines upon his countenance as plainly announced him to be past the middle age, as if the world had been then

possessed of certain duodecimo volumes relating to the peerage, (more accurate than they frequently are at present,) in which the day, month, and year of his birth had been so clearly pointed out, as to demonstrate that circumstance.

Sir Simon eagerly stepped forward, and seizing the right hand of this important personage, pressed it with the air of one whose affection has overpowered the humility which otherwise ought to have been more conspicuous in his address.

The other stood upright, with his hand extended, till Sir Simon thought proper to release it. He then, for an instant, cast his eyes upon Hugh, and immediately afterwards turned them towards his own acquaintance, as if for some explanation.

" My lord, this is my nephew," said the knight: " he has been with me before, but was not likely to attract your lordship's notice. Hugh, make your bow to my Lord Nortonborough."

Young Mondomer did as he was desired;

and the earl curled his mouth, and inclined his head in a slanting direction, but forwards upon the whole.

"I have a communication to make," said his lordship, "which is somewhat of a delicate nature: is it your wish, that this — that any body — that this young gentleman should be present?"

Hugh left the room without giving his uncle time to request it, and continued engaged for something more than an hour in occupations of his own.

Sir Simon was really a good-natured man. Had he lived in all respects like his friend, Sir Giles Harlande, it is much if he would not have been as inoffensive and worthy a character; and that is saying a great deal. But some, we must admit, have always doubted that; urging very plausibly, that he had ever more vanity in his disposition than Sir Giles, and that where there is much vanity there must be, at times, ill temper. Be that, however, as it may, there is little doubt but that even the corruption, jealousies, and meannesses, which he had been a constant wit-

ness of during the far greater portion of his life, had not entirely poisoned his native disposition. For, in truth, nobody about the court showed more candour in judging of the conduct of others, and excusing their failings. In the very worst he was apt to discover some one honourable or agreeable quality, which prevented, in his heart at least, their utter condemnation.

To these instances of indulgence, however, my Lord of Nortonborough had always been an exception. With every disposition to think favourably of a person who, by some means or other, was certainly of fashionable consideration, our knight discovered nothing in his character, but a compound of conceit, frivolousness, profligacy, and insolence; unredeemed, as far as Sir Simon could make out, by any single good quality. It is therefore not without some feeling of shame for the head of the house of Mondomer, we are obliged to confess, that had the Earl of Bristol (as he afterwards became), or any other of the greatest characters of the times, waited upon Sir Simon, such an ho-

nour could not have excited in that gentleman's breast a more sudden glow of exultation, than did the visit of a being such as has been just described; and merely because he happened to be the near relation of a very profligate woman, who happened to be the mistress of a very bad man, who happened to be the favourite of a very weak one.

What the gay knight's floating expectations from this conference might have been, nobody can say. But it is probable that something very like disappointment ensued, from the circumstance of his sending, immediately after the earl's departure, for his own man; and entering, forthwith, upon a course of lectures, neither edifying or agreeable to the latter. This was the same John Hannacott whom we before mentioned as his confidential servant.

Not that Sir Simon talked *confidentially* to him on the present occasion: indeed my Lord Nortonborough's visit was almost the

only subject he did not take in hand. But household matters, new equipage, price of corn, under-servants, and boots, were all discussed; and on every topic, we are sorry to say, the utmost fretfulness and peevishness were displayed.

"And nothing," said Sir Simon, towards the conclusion of the conference, "but your being an old servant of the family could excuse such answers as you have thought fit to give me. Then look at the garden—every thing's of a piece: tricks and contrivance to save appearances. Just round the house it may look tolerably smooth and well; but when one descends to the lower terraces, I protest I am absolutely ashamed of the disgraceful state of the whole."

"Why, Laud! Sir Simon!" says John, "that's Kirkman's business. Not but what I was down there with him, only yesterday, and nothing wrong to speak of—as I see."

"As you see!" rejoined his master. "Very

probably not. I only know, that, upon my sacred word of honour, it gives me a pain in my stomach whenever I walk there. But these matters, it seems, are in Kirkman's department: nothing ever goes wrong in yours. Give me leave," added he, in a soft voice, meant to indicate that he had subdued his ill-humour, " to ask, what became of all the brimstone that was brought into the house about a week ago, combustibles enough to have destroyed the whole city? Only favour me with an answer to that."

" I can't tell just now, your honour, Sir Simon; not I," returned Hannacott. " Brimstone! 'twas all used, I suppose. What was I to do with it? I could'nt eat it, Sir Simon."

" Faith, John," growled out his master, " some measures must be taken;" and then, with a significant shake of the head, as if he by no means acceded to Hannacott's last position, he dismissed the latter from his presence. When by such methods our man of high life had taken off the fiery edge of his

spleen, and felt that he had again the requisite degree of self-command, he determined to tell Hugh, with his own mouth, what it was impossible long to keep from his knowledge; and ordered him to be sent for accordingly.

CHAPTER V.

Upon the young man's arrival, his uncle beckoned to him to be seated, and spoke to the following effect:—

"The great and leading folly of mankind is their tendency to run into extremes. Yourself, for instance, Hugh; who, because you had heard, and truly heard, of the emptiness, insufficiency, baseness, falsehood, and disgusting disappointments of public life, were for shutting yourself up entirely."

Here Hugh made an effort again to deny a charge which he had positively denied before; but his uncle prevented him.

"Give me leave, young gentleman, to say just one word. Now it does not follow that the direct contrary to what is wrong must therefore be right. But so far you are right, that a private life must be free from some inconveniencies to which its opposite is subject, and amongst them, to no circumstance whatever

more detestably disagreeable than this—that a public man is a sort of property to the vulgar, inquisitive, and malicious, and must pay the penalty of having the most impertinent reports coupled with his name. I'll give you a strong example of this, Hugh. My promotion to the peerage has been very impudently and ridiculously talked of; but so confidently, that nothing can be more probable than people's supposing me to have actually expected it; which is so far from being the case, that nobody on earth will be found more ready cordially to congratulate those whose patents are now making out, as my Lord Nortonborough informs me. If a man really thinks that his intrinsic consequence can be increased by a peerage, or a riband, or any bauble whatever; upon my word, I have always candidly said, that so far from a weakness, in my opinion, he is quite right to sue for it, and spare no pains or solicitation to acquire it. I happen, (there is no merit in so doing), but I happen to estimate very differently the real importance of such things.

Most of my time, indeed, has been spent in situations of distinction: my early inclinations led me to a public career; and a great and discerning sovereign, our late illustrious queen, thought fit to give me some encouragement. But for some time I have been displeased: indeed, my dear Hugh, I may say seriously grieved at the way in which things are now conducted; and, at my age, it is time to think of other matters besides the vanities of this delusive world. The head of the ancient line of the Mondomers could hardly be advanced by a peerage of the present day; and such a condition is, I conceive, amply grand for one who is about to retire from public life, as I have serious thoughts of doing."

Young Mondomer assumed the necessary look of interest and attention during this speech; and as he valued not, probably from never thinking upon the subject, any additional consequence which might attach to him from his uncle's promotion, it was no difficult task for him to soothe, in some degree, the bitterest pangs of Sir Simon's mortification, and, by a

skilful management of the discourse, half to persuade him that he really was the philosopher he had announced himself to be. Besides, the hint of a retreat to Mondomer Castle altogether, acted agreeably upon Hugh's mind. There he could talk over every thing with his uncle that he had most at heart, without fear of the usual prejudices. There he could indulge his own rational pursuits; and there, in short, he would be in the very next county to Belton. But no such immediate good fortune was in store for him.

In a day or two afterwards, when Sir Simon was all but fully equipped to attend a tournament, at which the sovereign was to be present, with all the grace and elegance that his court could furnish, John Hannacott, who had officiated at these preparations, was sent below to see that the horses were ready at the exact moment determined upon.

At the bottom of the great staircase he met Hugh. After surveying him for some moments with a look of pride and admiration, and the familiar smile of a very old friend, for

as such our youth certainly considered him: "Bless us, Master Hugh!" he broke out, "let the ladies look to their hearts to-day! Then you're not to be dressed alike, after all; for your uncle's as solemn—purple and gold—as if he were going in fit state, all grand and fine, to be tried for his life; but you glitter like a bridegroom!"

"This I know," said Hugh, throwing back his shoulders with considerable effort, "that unless the two top buttons of this doublet are kept open, it will be too tight over the chest. But stay, John; are we to wait here for the Lady de Lyle, or to meet her at the tilt-yard?"

"My lady 'll be here, sir; and I'm to order the horses out, so that she don't wait half a moment. And who, of all people in the land, do you think is coming too? As I'm a sinner alive—here she is! I cannot stop another instant."

The tawdry, massy, cumbersome coach, dragged by six immense long-tailed blacks, and both preceded and followed by an imposing escort, now stopped at the grand entrance.

Hugh ran forwards, and assisted two ladies to alight. The former he did not know: the latter took him by the hand, and, with a grave but affectionate address, inquired as to his welfare, and that of the Harlande family.

"My uncle, madam, will attend immediately," said he, as, with the ladies, he entered a large apartment upon the ground-floor; "he has already given orders for our horses to be brought round, so that your ladyship is not likely to be detained."

"We are in time sufficient," she replied. "Lady Essex, this young man is the only son of my second brother; upon whom, it is probable, will devolve whatever honours our family may attain. His education, neither I, nor my brother now living, had any concern in: he is now, however, entirely resident here, and of his appearance you will judge for yourself."

Hugh had, by this time, taken sundry glances at his new acquaintance, whom he had heard much of; but never before seen. She was rather under the middle size, but an elegant

figure; of very tender age apparently, dressed profusely, but with much more irregularity, and more fantastically than those times usually gave countenance to. Her complexion dazzling, with black hair and large dark eyes, of uncommon lustre, which rolled about eccentrically, as if, indeed, there had been some physical opposition to their remaining at rest. What she thought of Hugh is uncertain; but at least she took up some time in observation to form a judgment—enough to be rather distressing to a youth who had not yet the graceful ease of the court.

At length she decided for his gracious reception; and professions of regard for any relation of her very valuable friend were accompanied with oglings, smiles, and striking attitudes. The observations of the baroness upon his nephew, had been distinctly heard by Sir Simon as he approached the apartment; and it was probably owing to certain recollections excited by them, that his reception of the ladies, and, in particular, his obeisance to the Countess of Essex, had less the effect of a

courtier's address in the quarter from whence he might expect his favourite point to be assisted, than that of a well-behaved, but ill-used man, who stands upon his dignity, though his native good-breeding obliges him to be civil even to those who have neglected him.

"As to the honours," said this man of resignation and philosophy, "which your ladyship is pleased to say may devolve upon Hugh Mondomer; you, sister, I suppose, are aware, with me, that they can consist only of the family name and property, (I hope, uninjured in my hands), the feelings and deportment of a gentleman, and, above all, an independent mind."

The ladies looked much as might have been expected if he had addressed them in Hebrew!

Sir Simon proceeded. "Of my nephew I will be bold to say, that his upright notions, good sense, and moderation, will never permit him to regret the loss of a slight advancement, which, had certain impertinent rumours been true, might easily have been extended to him.

And to a respectable character, resident upon his own domain, perhaps the purest and most enviable felicity ——"

"Do not make yourself ridiculous, brother," said the baroness, who now began to comprehend the matter; and, in consequence, talked apart with the Lady Essex. Then turning to Sir Simon: "Have you heard at all from the Earl of Suffolk?"

"I neither have, madam, or desire to; but my Lord Nortonborough was here yesterday."

"I know he was," she replied; "and he thought, like most others, that Lord Suffolk's alteration in the list of new promotions was in all respects to be attended to; but this minister can by no means compass all that his predecessor, the Earl of Salisbury, might. Every thing, however, has been set right. We should be moving now, brother—with your experience, I am quite astonished. But be careful not to expose yourself farther."

She then, as if to receive commands, looked towards the countess; who, having agreed

that there should be no longer delay, the cavalcade proceeded.

Hugh had seen some of these grand doings before, but never any thing that brought together so much of what was most brilliant in the land. At first, his attention was totally taken up by the general effect of the spectacle. The space marked out for the lists—the different dresses and demeanour of the several ranks of officers in waiting there—the splendid assemblage of beauty, and high station displayed in covered seats, extending round two sides of the amphitheatre; while in front a throne of crimson velvet, with deep gold fringe, was erected for their majesties, who sat enveloped by a cloud of standing courtiers. When the impression of the first glare and glitter had in some measure abated, Hugh looked with eager anticipation of amusement at the sports which soon commenced. But here his expectations were not answered. In the three first encounters the parties were afraid of each other, and after much parade

little or nothing was done. The fourth promised better—the antagonists lost their temper, and the lance of one, with a most unpleasant and irritating shock, carried away the visor of his opponent, brushing, at the same time, his face so rudely, that the blood dropped upon his housings. The latter wheeled his charger furiously round, and, by every gesture, seemed bent, at whatever price, upon the most complete revenge, when James interposed by sign to the attending officers, and all farther mischief was prevented. The monarch our hero had seen sufficiently often, to be prepared against any disappointment which might have arisen from his mean countenance and duck-legged, ungainly figure. But the deportment of the courtiers amused him infinitely. He had not been inattentive to the few words of his aunt before they left Sir Simon's, and was therefore by no means surprised at the evident good spirits that the latter enjoyed. They were chastened, indeed, by the proper gravity of behaviour which long practice had enabled him to assume, but supported him through the

day to admiration. Towards every body he either looked, bowed, smiled, or spoke exactly in the manner that their consequence demanded. Hugh's observation, however, was chiefly attracted by Rochester. At an early opportunity he had been presented by his aunt to that object of his sovereign's blind partiality—of every woman's admiration, and every man's detestation and envy. The youth was prepared to dislike him, and had worked up his features into the fit expression of coldness, independence, and unconcern, which was to have accompanied his bow, when he was totally disarmed by an encouraging, and, indeed, fascinating manner (very different, truly, from the insolence of Lord Nortonborough), accompanied by smiling professions, which soon convinced our hero that he had hitherto been deceived by listening to the stories and suggestions of malice; for that, with such affability, so sweet and captivating an address, and such eminent beauty of person, the rapid exaltation of the favourite was not a thing to be astonished at: the

wonder would rather have been—if it had not happened.

"Stop! young man," said Sir Simon, suddenly seizing Hugh's wrist, though he had at that time no thoughts whatever of moving; "the king is coming out this way. Perhaps his majesty—but I can't tell—stand where you are: for your life, stand where you are!"

In an instant the company formed into two rows, and James was soon discerned waddling along, till he arrived within sight of young Mondomer. After turning his head towards Rochester, from whom he received some communication, he appeared to recollect our hero, and advanced towards him. Now was the passion of curiosity predominant throughout the crowd: those that could see what was going on, communicated it to those that could not, and all were dying to know who the young man was, and every syllable that the monarch was saying to him; which ardent and particular desire, it is to be hoped, is not extended to any now living, as we have been credibly informed that the observations were,

in reality, but little worth commemorating. They consisted of questions as to his age—whether he was a good horseman—where he was educated—whether his father had taught him any Greek—and concluded with jokes about sweethearts. Trifling as all this might be, it promoted Hugh instantaneously into an object of general notice. Sir Simon could not conceal his exultation; Rochester smiled familiarly upon him; the Countess of Essex made an observation to him in a low tone, as she passed, with her face close to his; and my Lord Nortonborough, throwing one arm familiarly across his shoulder, walked with him some paces, twisting, grinning, and telling, under the notion of playfulness and wit, a story of some distressing accident that had happened amongst the crowd.

With all this vain distinction, however, it is but too probable that our young friend was delighted rather than disgusted in the degree in which a wise man ought to have been, and in which we hope, rather than believe, men of double his age, at all periods, would have been.

It was only in the deportment of the Lady de Lyle that Hugh could discover no difference: she had been decidedly in the same coterie with the favourite during the whole entertainment; and, together with her female friend, had been noticed, far differently from the way in which ladies usually were, by James himself. But her spirits never appeared to rise, and an air of deep thought, not to say melancholy, prevailed constantly over her countenance, and had not quitted her when the assembly broke up.

"You are a discreet, sensible lad, Hugh," said his uncle, as they returned together; "many a person of more than your age would have stood blushing, and simpering, and quite bewildered, while his majesty was addressing him; but you did yourself credit. Too much ease would have been as bad as too little. And how have you liked your day's amusement?"

"Why, very well; indeed, every thing considered, very much. You know, sir, I have not many acquaintances of my own age,

but I saw the Stanleys for a moment, and had a little talk with Edward Vere. Oh! by the way, I congratulate you, uncle!"

"Upon what event?"

"Why, every thing is arranged, I hear, about the — you know, sir, about — what you thought was — what you thought was not — about — the title, in short."

"Ay, true — I did not recollect; though that is a matter of as much importance to you as to me, for the peerage will be settled upon you after my death. I feel not at all certain that it is a subject of satisfaction; many inconveniences attending the change, and the envy of one's present equals. Then, the step itself is no mighty promotion. — But the *manner* in which it was done! That, Hugh, I own gratifies my feelings, and that alone."

CHAPTER VI.

In due course, and without loss of time, the patent was published, granting to Sir Simon Mondomer, knight, with every possible addition that could be thrown in, the dignity of a baron, by the name, style, and title of Baron Mondomer, of Mondomer Castle, in Northumberland, with remainder to the heirs male of the body of his late brother; and something less than a fortnight had nearly surfeited him with my lord, and your lordship, introduced by John Hannacott and the rest of the servants, at the rate of about eleven times in a sentence. One morning, soon after breakfast, he most pathetically lamented his having refused the Stanleys' invitation for that day, under an expectation of business, which did not ultimately take place, and desired Hugh to wait upon, and offer to escort his aunt. But that lady, it appeared, was equally pre-

vented from joining the party, and commissioned her nephew to make her excuses with every imaginable form of civil expression, to General Stanley, and to apprize him that an agent from the north, who could not remain more than twenty-four hours in London, had, most vexatiously, arrived at that particular moment: and so much of the day must necessarily be devoted to him, that she should be detained till very late; indeed she was apprehensive of not being able to go at all.

Young Mondomer, therefore, attended by his own man, set forward at the hour appointed, and proceeded with alacrity and lively thoughts, from the anticipation of an agreeable day, till they stopped at a spacious house, built in form of the letter H, and situated (at that period) decidedly clear of all suburbs of the town, upon the banks of the Thames, on the Surrey side. General Stanley received our hero much as well-bred people have always received their guests before that time, and since; and as soon as the shackles of ceremony could be got rid of, Hugh, accompanied by

Geoffrey Stanley, the youngest of the two sons, walked out to see the gardens. It was the indispensable mode, indeed, at that time, to make some such excursion, if they were to be seen at all, as even the flower gardens were by no means commanded from the windows of the chief rooms in the house; but in order to get at them, it was necessary to pass through five or six square enclosures surrounded by lofty brick walls. Between the house and river, however, nothing intervened but a large and cheerful meadow, on which several tents were then pitched, and Hugh was given to understand that all the refreshments of the day would be there conducted. The gardens had been shown in form, and the two youths were now examining the tents, when young Stanley observed, that it was forty to one but they should have rain.

"No," said Hugh, looking upward with his hand above his eyes, "not with this wind, 'tis the finest day we have had this year: why should you think so?"

"Because it always makes a point of raining when one has to dine out of doors. So my Lord Mondomer is engaged, and your aunt doesn't come either. To tell you the truth, Mondomer, you must pardon me, but I feel as if I should outlive the latter misfortune; she is so grave, for a party of this sort at least, and so inaccessible a person, I can much easier get acquainted with the Lady Essex than with her."

"They are different characters, certainly," said Hugh.

"Do you know," continued Geoffrey, "that we were nearly involved in an awkward scrape.—My father met Sir Thomas Overbury three or four days ago, and asked him to be one of us for this party; and within eight hours afterwards my Lord Rochester sent word, that it would be acceptable to him if Lady Essex should be invited. Now the difficulty was, what could be done about Overbury?"

"What was it to him?" said Hugh, "where was the difficulty? Surely all those parti-

cular circumstances between her and Lord Rochester, that are talked of by every one, must be well known to so intimate a friend of the viscount!"

"Known; yes, I believe so, indeed.—I'll tell you a secret, Hugh, which it be would long enough before you got from your politic uncle. Sir Thomas is at the bottom of all this courtship; he puts them in each other's way, and every body thought that he intended all to happen which has—or will. Now what has gone wrong, or how he has miscalculated, destroy me if I can tell: but that he and the countess hate each other as Satan hates the Cross, is out of all doubt: and as a proof of it, my father took care to let Overbury know of her intention to be with us, and he excused himself immediately."

Here the whole assembly was seen advancing upon the lawn. It was not numerous, but of highest fashion; and a conversation ensued, in which Rochester and the Countess of Essex were the only persons who talked quite at their ease. They, indeed,—delighted

with each other, and much more with themselves, were gracious and interesting, sometimes lively, sometimes profound, and commended every thing, and chattered, and laughed, and ate, and drank. Nortonborough had a much less delightful game to play; that, namely, of endeavouring to recommend himself to the favourite by unremitting flattery both of that personage and his own niece, and by agreeing (in the right place, too, which required continued attention,) with whatever either of the two said in the serious way, together with ready shouts of laughter at their sallies in the light way; occupations that left him no leisure for making himself either civil or entertaining to any of inferior note. There were a few others whose object was either to rival or improve their intimacy with Nortonborough himself. General Stanley was anxious about the main effect of his entertainment; and his sons, with young Mondomer, made little effort to take part in the discourse at large: they had, however, their own talk, and, indeed, their own laugh, to which (we

understand) some of the most distinguished characters in company contributed. After the repast, boats were called for, and several made their appearance, with splendid awnings, silken streamers, rowers with striped and gaudy jackets, and a water excursion ensued. Two barges accompanied the party with bands of music, and in the evening every body said, and the host felt, to his great satisfaction, that the whole had answered charmingly. The three young men were loitering by the water side during the ceremony of the others' departure, when Hugh took notice that such a day was highly refreshing to one who, like himself, had been unused to the metropolis at that time of year.

"The court does remain particularly late this year," said James Stanley, the eldest; "nor do I believe that the king means to remove, to any distance at least, all through the autumn. I like the end of a bustling, ceremonious entertainment; one feels a sort of weight off the mind, and so completely at one's ease.—Why should you think it

necessary to go, Mondomer, merely because the rest do? You can very well sleep here; the house is large enough, I should imagine."

Hugh excused himself upon the ground of his uncle expecting him, and having detached servants to bring him.

"Bring you!" said Geoffrey; "you came here on horseback; don't you return in the same way?"

"No; it was settled that if the evening continued fine, my man should return early with the horses, and my uncle's barge be sent across to take me up at Lambeth Terrace, to which, I presume, there will be no difficulty in walking."

"More than you suppose," replied the eldest; "you think of keeping along the water's edge, but there are enclosed grounds farther down, which make that impracticable. You must leave my father's, bearing strait to the southward, then turn to your left through lanes, or rather paths, which will lead you to the point you speak of in a north-easterly direction."

Here a servant from the house acquainted James Stanley that his father wanted him.

"That will prevent me," said he, "from going part of the way with you, Mondomer, to put you in the path. Never mind your devoirs to my father; I shall say every thing necessary for you. And if you really must go, I don't know that there's much time to lose; 'tis nearly half past eight, and my brother will conduct you as well as I could. Mind, Geoffrey, that you do not turn again to the right after you have gained the path between the orchards."

So saying, he returned to General Stanley, and the other two soon got clear of the grounds immediately belonging to his mansion.

"At what time was the barge to be ready for you?" said Geoffrey.

"Oh, I hardly know to a minute: much about this time, perhaps. 'Tis probably there by now."

"I am not clear," observed the other, "that your servant acted so discreetly in going back with the horses—d'ye see how it

lightens? that storm will come up much closer in the course of the night."

"Not before both of us are at home, and in bed."

"I feel some doubts of that," said his companion.

"Have you ever," observed Mondomer, "known Lady Essex in such childish spirits before? It might have been an awkward accident; and where was the necessity for her scrambling on board of the music-barge at all?"

"Her foot slipped, I think," said the other.

"She declared not; but that the plank was uneven. No woman living, she says, steps so firmly as herself. But this much I will undertake to affirm, that had it not been for one of your boat-men, my lord viscount must either have made up his mind to lose her, or risked his own precious life, by plunging heroically into the water after her.—Is this the lane, Geoffrey? then I need trouble you no longer."

"I shall prefer going with you to Lambeth: I shall, upon my honour. The wind must

rise, I think, by the time I return; and it will be a pleasant walk back. Did you ever feel so close an evening?"

"Look at that fellow before us! look at him!" said Hugh. "See how he comes on, muttering and throwing his arms about!"

His companion made a dead halt, and held tight by Hugh's arm. A short, dark figure was rapidly advancing upon them through the narrow path between two high hedges. On a sudden he stopped—wrapped a long black cloak all about him, completely covering his face, and turning abruptly, was out of sight in a moment. Mondomer was struck by the agitation of his companion, and on looking upon him, observed that he had become quite pale.

"What is the meaning of all this, Geoffrey?"

"As I hope to be saved eternally, I believe it was Forman!"

"And who, in the name of heaven!" said Hugh, "is Forman?"

"I really am not able to tell you," answered the other; "not exactly, at least. I

never saw him before—not in this lane before: he seldom appears in the day-time."

"Nay," said Hugh, "then it seems you *can* tell something about him. Why should we be afraid of him?—we two! Come, come; is he a robber?"

"No, he is not, I give you my word. Upon my life, Hugh, if there was the least danger of an attack from thieves, I should not be for turning back. But I cannot go on—there's a reason for it."

"You won't!" returned Hugh; "then I'll proceed by myself. What am I to fear?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing at all!" cried the other. "Keep this path—this very path; mind that—never leave it. Though stay—the sun is but just above the horizon; I really think it will be a bad night, and you have now near two miles to the stairs below the palace, where you are to take boat. Oh, come back, and sleep at my father's; do, Mondomer."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing," said Hugh: "this is quite ridiculous. But I must

insist upon your telling me what you know about this Forson, or whatever the name is, for you have excited my curiosity."

"Forman! I said," replied Geoffrey: "the peasantry and children call him Doctor Forman. He is an extraordinary character; but I never knew any thing in particular about him. All I ever heard was, that my Lord Chief Justice's warrant was out against him about nine months since. But he had powerful friends, it was said."

"For what offence?" said Mondomer with quickness.

"Oh, something very black and bad, as they told me; but, by all the powers above! I can't say any more about it. We stand talking foolishly, and don't know who may overhear us. There! it begins to thunder! I tell you what, Master Hugh," in a tone meant to appear unconcerned and playful, "I should recommend to you to turn back for speedy shelter, a good supper, and a comfortable bed."

But our hero was more than ever determined

to persevere. He was piqued into a resolution not to give way; and the more he perceived himself affected by his friend's terrors, (for that really was the case, though he could not exactly explain, or entirely comprehend them), the more he felt it his duty to make an effort against their influence: therefore, after some more persuasions, but fainter and fainter, on the part of Geoffrey Stanley, the latter turned back, and trudged homeward, in no very agreeable state of mind. He was vexed with himself for deserting his companion. Such a course of reflection, however, was so extremely humiliating and unpleasant, that he forthwith shifted his ground; and being, as we have stated, displeased with himself, he took that personage roundly to task, for having been such a fool as to propose going on the entire way to Lambeth. He was likewise out of humour because he had not been sufficiently upon his guard to conceal his trepidation, and invent some fit excuse for returning. But above all, he was out of humour with Hugh, for not being prevailed upon to go back with

him. To do him justice, however, we should add, that he said no more than the truth when he asserted, that had his apprehension been of robbers alone, he would surely have proceeded. Horrors, of a very different description, possessed his imagination, the nature of which Hugh began to suspect when Stanley took his departure. No sooner had Mondomer lost sight of him, than the very circumstance of feeling himself alone after such ideas had been infused into his mind, seemed grand and imposing; and our youth walked boldly forward, with his head erect, his chest open, and his right arm extended freely, the left being enveloped in his cloak.

"What a difference," said he internally, "is produced in our imaginations by the time at which a story may be related to us. Should I have attended to these obscure and broken hints in the broad mid-day? why then should they now have any effect upon me? And after all," thought he, "what is it that I have heard? A crime was alluded to—and such black offences unquestionably exist; the works

of the first men and most learned divines expressly sanction the opinion, and our own shuddering suspicions and innate sensations of horror confirm it."

The lightning now tinged the distant clouds, and Hugh thought it as far off as ever; but in the next moment came a grand and more extended flash, of a deeper red, which seemed to illumine half the heavens, and cast a gleam upon the path before him. It was followed, after but a short interval, by an awful roar of thunder, and there could no longer be any doubt that the storm had commenced.

Mondomer had now arrived at a spot where the road branched in two directions, and each might have been called a continuation of the same footway. The straiter of the two bent somewhat to the left, and Hugh thought it would probably bring him back again into the same course that he had proceeded by before. The other pointed immediately to the right, and, as he conceived, towards the river, in an easterly direction. There was no time for hesitation: he chose the way to the right, and,

soon quitting the narrow bounded lane, passed into a grove of lofty trees.

The rain then fell in large and sullen drops, which pattered among the boughs, and splashed in the water not far from him, though none was just within sight. At that moment he had a glimpse of a figure moving before him. Now it was visible between the trees: now he lost it again. Then he fancied that he saw the object leave the grove at its farthest extremity from him. Could it be the same person that he had met with young Stanley, and who had instantly affected the latter with such terror? Was he himself in the right road? 'Twas doubtful:—but he resolved at all events to go on; and proceeded accordingly, moving, at the same time, his sword backwards and forwards in the sheath, either from an absent habit, or to ascertain that it drew easily. When he came to the spot, or near upon it, where the object before him had totally disappeared, there was yet light enough to discover a canal of stagnant water, part of it green and corrupt; and by

the side of that sombre lake appeared an avenue, in the formation of which the high trees were scanty, but connected together by massy hedges of yew, or hornbeam, as it seemed to Mondomer. This avenue lay directly in his way, and in the course of it he came to a low, obscure house, not two stories in height, but occupying a larger space of ground than the generality of cottages. At this dwelling the avenue ended, and the path, which passed it, became quite narrow, and turned into some fields.

By this time it rained like a torrent; the wind, which had slept the whole day, howled shrilly, and burst, as it were, from every point of the compass at once; and the night set in, dark as the grave, except when every thing around seemed momentarily on fire, from the glare of the lightning. It occurred to Hugh, to ask at that dwelling—not, indeed, for shelter, which was now quite superfluous, he being already drenched to the skin, but for the purpose of farther inquiry as to his path; though he felt little doubt that the figure

whom, as he suspected, he had heard spoken of so mysteriously, had recently entered the building.

"Be that as it may," thought he, "I will not be ruled by imagination. I mean no harm to any one, and will fear none myself."

At this instant he saw, or believed he saw, in a vivid blaze of lightning, several strange shapes glide towards the hut, and could not help fancying that they never touched the ground. But all was again profound darkness. Mondomer paused—then resolutely advanced towards the house, and, while feeling for the door, heard, very clearly, some talking within. He was struck with the sound of one of the voices, and, upon listening more attentively, received such a shock—so dreadful, and totally unexpected, that his blood could scarcely flow! It was the voice of the Baroness de Lyle! When that ceased, he endeavoured to persuade himself he had been mistaken; and again drew near to listen; but was confirmed in his frightful suspicions. What was he to do now? The most horrible thoughts and

apprehensions distressed him; he was strangely perplexed—but felt an indistinct sort of comfort from knowing nothing absolutely of what he most dreaded. The present impulse was to avoid knowing more: he quitted the place, therefore, with precipitation—took the footpath, or what he guessed to be a footpath, over the meadows; and though he never hit it, but had to scramble over obstructions of almost every possible description, he, at length, reached the outskirts of a village.

"What do you call this place?" said he, to a man whom he had nearly run against, with a small barrel slung upon one arm, and a long fork over his shoulder. "Am I near to the river?"

"Close, master," said the other: "this be part o' Lambeth. Where be ye come from, sir?"

Hugh was in a fever of anxiety about all he had witnessed, and hoped for some relief from his suspicion; though he hardly knew what. He described the hut and avenue.

"Lord save us all!" cried the man. "Hast been by Dr. Forman's in such a night as this?"

At that name Hugh felt a chill to his very heart.

"Who be ye, young gentleman?" continued the other, cautiously retiring from him.

"A stranger hereabout," answered Hugh. "But why should I not pass that way?"

"Heaven only knows! there be strange tales, I think. But he never hurt me yet, the doctor. They be none of my bus'ness;" and he was going, when Hugh inquired his way to the terrace.

"Down this row only—then short to the left; and there 'tis. Bless ye, master—good night."

Mondomer found the barge, and, after exploring three ale-houses, (for there were a variety within two hundred yards of the ferry steps,) his uncle's servants likewise. Much was said about their fears for his safety, their eager inquiries when he failed to arrive in time, and their relief at seeing him then; though, in point of fact, those inquiries had been limited to the house where he discovered them, and a previous one of a similar description, in

which they declared, and were probably sincere, as that declaration was backed by many oaths, that they could meet with nothing drinkable. The storm was now much diminished; but the night continued windy, with occasional showers. When they arrived, the peer had been asleep for some hours; and after Hannacott, who sat up for Hugh, not altogether without alarm, had administered two bumpers of brandy to our hero, the latter retired likewise. Never, for an instant, could he divert his thoughts from the occurrences of that evening.

Lambeth, he well remembered, was a place where Blanche Harlande had informed him that his aunt had some strange connexion; and upon that, and all circumstances relating to it, he pondered, till his ideas became indistinct; and the fatigue he had gone through, together with the brandy, procured him a sound sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

"Not that a person of sense and knowledge of the world expects actual delight during every instant of such parties of pleasure," said Lord Mondomer to his nephew, at breakfast, the next morning; "there will always be, as in life at large, minor disappointments after the main point is carried. Now the main point for you, is to get established in proper society. Ease, comfort, and consequence, in such society, will follow in their course: indeed, the very restraint that is at first imposed upon a young man, has its advantages—indeed has it. But you're not attending to a syllable one says."

"Not attending, sir! I beg your pardon—I assure you I was; and quite agree with you, that they have. Yes, many advantages, and very great ones too—in general; that is to say ——."

"They! how do you mean?" returned the peer. "Nay, Hugh, I begin to suspect that something happened yesterday, which has obtained pretty entire possession of your thoughts. Come—who was it? What new acquaintance did you make? Was Alice Stanley there—the niece? grown a fine lass, I'm told. Oh! I have it; one of the Lady Alfretons—Sophia! and very good taste too, my boy."

"Indeed, my lord, Lady Sophia was not there," replied Hugh: "only the eldest; and of her I can't think very highly—as to looks, at least; and I am not much acquainted with either."

"Aye; but you ought to be: you should create an interest; obtain an object that will give a spirit to your life, and make you eager to mix in company. Far am I from meaning that you should fall in love, as the swains call it, and sit, moping, biting your nails, and writing verses; or else ramble about, talking to yourself, like a lunatic. Why I, at your age, always contrived to be just so much in

love with somebody, as made me gallant, and agreeable to every body. And that sort of passion lasted, with me, to the time of the grand entertainment at Kenilworth. Did I ever tell you of that splendid and magnificent affair, in all its particulars?"

"No, you never did, uncle; but I have heard my father speak of it as an interesting circumstance in the family."

"As what? How should your father have known much about it? Your father, did you say?"

"Yes, sir; I'm positive he once told me, that in your youth, your lordship was attached to a Mistress Matilda Socks."

"Upon my life, Hugh, this degree of absence and inattention is too much; 'tis downright ill-breeding; I will not converse any more."

"Nay, but my dear uncle——"

"I won't, upon my honour."

And breakfast being over, stately stepped his lordship from the apartment.

Our young friend would have been vexed

at even displeasing his uncle in this slight degree, had not other matters filled his entire mind. He could not but feel persuaded that the Lady de Lyle had formed some bad and dangerous connexion: how far she might have involved herself in wickedness that was dreadful to think of, he had no means of judging, but hoped she might be ignorant, in some measure at least, of the character of her associate, or that she only made use of such a person for some particular end, without a concern in his general habits, or that she might be partially imposed upon — or, he scarcely had any definite notion what. Then he considered how it might be his duty to act. To tell Lord Mondomer went extremely against him: besides, full well did he know how impracticable a being the peer was to convince of any thing unsatisfactory to his feelings, or unpromising to his interests. Hugh had no very tender affection, nor was it natural he should, for his aunt: but she was his ever dear father's sister, and the honour of the family was deeply concerned in her con-

duct. He was able to form no decided plan of proceeding, but determined, as his agitation did not suffer him to remain quiet, that he would see the baroness, and take the chance of what the interview might produce; though he stood greatly in awe of her extraordinary mind and temper, which his present suspicions, however they might render her odious, did not tend to lessen. It was scarcely ten when he arrived at her dwelling-house, and made his inquiries of the porter, who withdrew to ascertain whether he could be admitted. According to all probability (thought Hugh), she has not returned from ——; and if she has, will hardly be visible as yet; but the servant reappeared with information that her ladyship was ready to receive him. In passing to a small room upon the second floor, where the baroness usually sat when quite in private, Hugh recollected the gallery of which Blanche had made mention, and it brought to his mind, in a general way, the circumstances of her narrative.

At his entrance, the lady closed a large

volume, which lay on a desk before her, and put it entirely aside.

"You are welcome, nephew," said she, "whatever may be the business that brings you here at present: many different occurrences, which I heartily lament, have hindered me hitherto from seeing so much of you as I could have desired; be seated."

"There is no particular cause, madam," replied Hugh, "for my now troubling you, beyond a wish to become really acquainted (which your ladyship seems to admit I have hardly been yet) with the sister of my respected and beloved father: to be received by her not as a relation merely, to whom, on that account, certain common expressions of affection are occasionally due, as a matter of form; but I could wish to be accounted her real friend, to reap the benefit of her experience and understanding in my own concerns, and to be of service to her in my turn (for, in the course of things, the opportunity may happen), if her affairs should require it."

"I am obliged to you, young gentleman,"

said the baroness with a smile, "and am pleased with your becoming language and manly deportment;" here she offered him her hand; "but you have as yet assigned no reason: don't mistake me, I am truly gratified at seeing you; I am, indeed—but you have given no reason for this unexpected visit—and I am sure you have one."

"Is it necessary, madam, to have some urgent and particular motive for waiting upon one of the only two near relations I have in the world?"

"Generally speaking, it would not be so," said she.

"Well, then, I will be candid with your ladyship. If all affection for so near a relative was out of the question, I should still feel it unpleasant, situated as I am, not to enjoy more than I have hitherto done of your intimacy and confidence. Being a person of great influence, you naturally attract much observation in the society to which I have been introduced, and when I am asked——"

"What, you cannot answer," interrupted

the lady; "there is no disgrace, or even inconvenience, that I know of, in admitting it. Hugh Mondomer, I have seen in no very happy life," (this was uttered with efforts to repress a convulsive sigh,) "an infinity of cunning and contrivance; I have looked deep into the human heart, and it will not be easy for a youth of your age to deceive me; be pleased, therefore, to let me know what it is that you want of me, or have to say to me: your object, to be brief, in coming here, for I am absolutely certain you have one."

Hugh had never expected to be fixed down so firmly and decidedly; and as, indeed, he was incapable of clearly stating suspicions which had assumed no positively intelligible form to his own mind, he became embarrassed, and was casting about for some subterfuge, when he felt ashamed at such conduct, and determined, whatever might be the result, to act with principle and truth.

"You are right, madam," said he, "I *have* something upon my mind, which has made me extremely uneasy for several hours;

and but for that, I should not now have disturbed you. An occurrence last night has afflicted and alarmed me—an occurrence near the village of Lambeth."

Here Mondomer looked up to observe the countenance of his auditor; but in the same moment that he raised his eyes, she turned to arrange some papers, and continued so employed for some time, with her back to him. Hugh waited till she had finished, when she again seated herself opposite to him, with an air of composure, but so death-like pale, that he feared she would faint every moment. He did not choose to make that observation, and in order to give time for her recovering herself, changed the subject.

" There is also a matter of great interest to me upon which I have desired to come to some explanation with your ladyship; and had I met with a fair opportunity, I should have done so long ago. Nothing, I will freely tell you, could have been more unpleasant or unwelcome to me than a certain communication of yours to Sir Giles Harlande, which

was the immediate cause of my leaving the north."

"Young man," replied the Lady de Lyle, "return to the subject from whence you have wandered."

"It distresses me excessively," said he, "and I am willing to hope I have been utterly mistaken: but since, madam, you insist upon hearing the frightful—delusion, I imagine, that affected me during the storm of last night, will you permit me, madam, to ask, Whether you have ever heard of a person whose name is Forman?"

The countenance of the lady assumed a strange and alarming expression! She leaned forward eagerly, resting on the table with her arms, and her eyes rivetted upon her nephew.

"Go on," she exclaimed, "I shall answer your question hereafter."

Mondomer continued:—

"I lost my way among the intricate lanes between the river and the place where, as you know, I had passed the day, and found myself, just when the night set in dark and

tempestuous, by a dead, still water: near to that, was a sort of shaded walk, which led me ——"

The baroness stopped him suddenly.

"Bless the Power," cried she, "which prevented you from intruding upon that habitation!—Oh! incarnate fiend!" she muttered as she quitted her chair, and paced up and down the room; then seating herself again, she sobbed most violently.

"For Heaven's sake do not thus agitate yourself," said Hugh; "I judged it right to tell you; but—what have I done?—The Lord direct me, I knew not what to do!"

"Your father never loved me," said she, wildly; "and yet there was a time when I was as good and innocent as himself."—Then, after some pause, she appeared to have at once recovered her usual deportment. "It is time to put an end to all this," she observed in a firm but calm voice: "Hugh Mondomer, listen to me: I *am* acquainted with the person you have mentioned; there unquestionably are some extraordinary and woeful circum-

stances connected with his life and character: but you know no evil of him, and are, or ought to be, superior to idle and malignant rumour. The spot to which, by some misfortune or fatality, you wandered last night, is familiar to me — I own it: but what you may have seen there, what you may have heard, or what you may suspect, I shall not inquire. You probably imagine, young man, that my fame, power, and, indeed, life itself, are at your mercy——"

"Do not," replied Hugh, "do not, I beseech you, madam, consider the subject in this perverted and gloomy manner. What motive could possibly have influenced me in coming here, but a desire to preserve your reputation, consequence, and, above all, your peace of mind?"

"And what may you be able to effect, that could depreciate my reputation?" returned the lady: "'tis you who are in danger, young man. We have had but little intercourse, Hugh; and, to speak the plain truth, cannot be supposed to feel any overflowing

tenderness on either side; but I would forego most of the few satisfactions that are left to me in existence, to have been spared the cause and anguish of this meeting."

"The way in which I have procured this conversation," said Hugh, "might perhaps have been better chosen; but I cannot lament the having attempted to gain your confidence: the state of my mind must have made the effort necessary at some time. I press no farther a subject you are disinclined to, but—if eagerness for any worldly object should have subverted early principles; if any dangerous and evil arts should have been resorted to, oh! let me supplicate, let me conjure you—there is yet time; trust in his mercy, who never fails the penitent—my dear, unhappy relation!"

"Is the boy mad?" said the baroness, with a haughty and indignant air. "Do you know to whom you are talking? Let me hear no more of this. You wish, it seems, to come to an understanding with me: in this respect, then, let us understand each other; unless in public, we meet no more: you suspect me of

the most diabolical guilt — I disdain your suspicions, and every possible effect of them. It is my opinion, that you will never dare (indeed I shall do you the justice to say, never desire) to bring shame, or attempt it, upon any part of your family: but if you do, your efforts will be vain, you will draw down upon yourself a host of enemies; your prospects will be blasted; your life rendered miserable; and those most dear to you will be involved in your misery."

Mondomer was shocked at this hardness of heart.

"But one word more, I implore you to hear me: the accident of last night may have been an interposition of Providence for the advantage of us all. It happened beyond expectation, and, Heaven knows, without any prying or meddling disposition on my part"

"No hypocrisy," replied the lady; "have you never indulged a baleful curiosity, and encouraged that of others? Enough of these subjects, however." And without giving time for an answer, she summoned her steward to

a conference upon domestic affairs, which obliged Mondomer to depart. His manner at taking leave was embarrassed and agitated; her's cold, and, to all appearance at least, unconcerned.

CHAPTER VIII.

Hugh turned, deeply thoughtful, into one of the walks of the park, which then equally served as an appendage to both the palaces of Whitehall and St. James's, and which, when he entered it, was nearly destitute of company. At first, he was inclined to reproach himself; but, on reflection, his conscience stood upon the defensive, and very fairly bore him out in all that he had said and done. He lamented that it was likely to be fruitless; but still hoped that the cloud might blow over by some means or other, though his efforts to dissipate it had been so far from promising.

He was disturbed from this reverie by the voices of several in conversation close behind him, and, on turning, perceived the Lady Essex, escorted by two elderly gentlemen.

"What! have we then stumbled upon a young cavalier!" exclaimed General Stanley.

" Come, sir, we shall force you into our ranks; her ladyship has been long enough wearied with companions of her grandfather's standing."

" A very slight degree of force will be requisite," returned Hugh, bowing to the countess; though he would have given two fingers of his right hand to have avoided the meeting, just at that moment.

" I protest," said Lady Essex, " I am apprehensive that we have broken in upon some interesting contemplations. Alone! and pensive! Now I have not a shadow of doubt, but that every acquaintance he has in the world might have passed Sir Hugh Mondomer in solemn procession, without attracting his notice, if they had not roused him by an observation."

" Your ladyship honours me with a title that I have no right to," said Hugh.

" As heir presumptive to a peerage, sir," observed Lord Latymer, with whom Mondomer had but slight acquaintance, " it is now pretty much a matter of course that the dis-

tinction of knighthood should be conferred upon you."

"As it certainly will," added Lady Essex, "at the very next court that his majesty may hold; and I give it him by a short anticipation. But I like your taste, sir; a solitary walk relieves one from the disgust of eternal bustle, whether it proceeds from serious business, or what is called pleasure."

"I should hope," replied Hugh first, though both the others were on the point of saying the very same thing, "that the Lady Essex seldom indulges that inclination, for the sake of society in general."

"Oh! you none of you understand me," squalled her ladyship; "the world is wretchedly mistaken as to my real character. Retirement is my passion. I am worn to death by the necessity of living so much in public. No; if I was to choose for myself, I should pass my whole life with some one entirely beloved and adored object!" Here her voice faltered, and Lord Latymer threw in the words—'Charming!

charming!' "With some one friend, I say, of congenial soul, to whom I should be every thing in existence, and who, to me, would be more than fifty worlds; and, with the beauties of nature ever blooming in constant variety around us; happy in each other; dispensing happiness and elegance to all our humble neighbours; bands of contented and admiring peasantry dancing beneath the trees, and strewing roses at our approach; not a wish ungratified; not a single violent or restless passion to agitate the delight, purity, and unruffled calmness of the breast ——."

Here, upon turning into a different walk, they met a man full in front, of striking appearance, who stopped, looked vexed at the accident; and then, slightly and generally bowing to the party, hurried by them. Lord Latymer looked another way: Stanley did not speak, but returned the salute. The countess broke off from her discourse, and stood still for some moments.

"Lead me from hence!" cried she, or rather shrieked. "Let me return! life is

worth nothing! every instant of my existence is polluted and poisoned, if I am liable to meet that wretch! that detested and accursed wretch!"

She trembled, and her countenance was absolutely livid with rage.

"I am astonished, sir," said she to General Stanley, "that any friend of mine—any associate of ours, should acknowledge him in my presence."

Her companions seemed distressed for her.

"My dear Lady Essex," said Stanley, "control yourself; there is probably some mistake, some wrong impression; and I really have been intimate with Overbury from my childhood."

"If there ever was upon this earth one more abominable, slanderous, and presumptuous villain than all others," cried the countess, with tears of passion, "he is that villain! Why is he suffered to obtrude himself in my way?"

"I fear, indeed," said Lord Latymer, "that he may, in some respects, have forgotten himself with regard to ——."

"In some respects!" shouted the lady: "by every thing sacred, I'll have my revenge! Would that the insolent detractor were in my power, body and soul, to decide upon his fate for ever."

"For heaven's sake! Lady Essex," cried Mondomer, extremely shocked, "consider where you are."

"Had not your ladyship better retire?" said the others.

This weak woman, having exhausted her spirits, had now gone off in a flood of tears, and suffered herself to be led, in silence, to her own residence, which was near at hand.

"I am an unfortunate creature," she observed, when they arrived at her gate, "and deserving of all your pity: born to be misconceived and misrepresented; but with a heart in the right place, as even my enemies allow. You, too, will form an erroneous judgment of me; for of all things I abominate a violent temper!"

This assertion produced no change in the looks of either Stanley or Latymer; but in

Hugh's countenance it is probable that her ladyship observed some peculiar expression.

"Alas!" said she to the latter, "you have lived far remote; you know not yet the selfishness and baseness of mankind. Young as I am, certainly younger than you by two or three years, I should think," (Hugh bowed a ready assent), "but too fatally have I experienced them: and by common instances, nobody now living would be so little likely to be discomposed as myself. But there is an outrage to the best and noblest impulses of the heart; and not to suffer acutely from such an injury, would argue one absolutely devoid of all tender affections—all that exquisite feeling which distinguishes the delicate from the ordinary mind. No such tameness for me. I best understand how to appreciate the conduct that has offended me, and should loathe, scorn, and detest myself, if I had not conceived and expressed all the indignation you have just been witnesses of, foreign as it is to my natural turn of mind."

So saying, she parted from her attendants;

either totally regardless of the degree of disgust she had excited; or, what is more probable, from the effect of inordinate conceit, fostered by success in society and universal adulation, imagining that her last efforts had completely obviated any such result; and that even her frantic violence might, as the consequence of feeling, strong affections, spirit, &c. &c. have been viewed with admiration.

In the course of the fortnight, or rather more, that had elapsed since young Mondomer, through the notice of his sovereign and other persons of high distinction, had greatly increased his acquaintance, he met with frequent opportunities of seeing, hearing, and observing the reigning favourite. And much as he had been taken with his first address, those opportunities had not at all advanced Rochester in our hero's good opinion. To be candid, however, the dislike and contempt which Hugh began to feel towards the viscount, might not have been entirely caused by the various defects in the mind and understanding of the latter, which were sufficiently

visible to a youth of sound observation. In fact, his manner, as to Hugh himself, had altered, and of late particularly. What Rochester originally expected from him, or how he meant to make use of him, we cannot say: but, upon discovering that, although Hugh felt and enjoyed, full as much as it deserved, any notice or distinction that he might acquire, he was careless about improving his success; that he was remiss in making up to Rochester himself, and continued to live about the court more as an observer than an actor, without any grand point of his own to carry; upon ascertaining, too, that he was far from being in the confidence of the Lady de Lyle, and indeed nothing more than a handsome, good-humoured, sensible lad; the viscount conceived a disdain for his ignorance and want of spirit, and a perfect detestation for some unfashionable principles which Hugh had occasionally maintained in discourse. He, therefore, treated our friend with much disregard; not to say rudeness. Nor did he return his salute when they met in the queen's

drawing-room, on the day after Hugh's interview with his aunt. Upon that occasion, however, his majesty received him with much the same sort of clumsy civility and kindness as formerly, and conferred on him the degree of knighthood, as the Lady Essex had predicted.

John Hannacott met his young master, on his return, with a broad grin and congratulations.

" Just step above with me, John," said Hugh, " and help me to get rid of all this finery, and become something more comfortable for the evening."

Hannacott attended him.

' I'faith, Sir Hugh," cried John, " instead of a knight, I thought, at first, you'd had one of they honours as come out last year: a barrow-knight, I fancy, they call 'em."

" Nay, the knighthood will do well enough for me: but do you know, John, I'm growing sick of it all."

" Sick of high life, sir !"

" Rather so, John. I'm never disposed to

tease my uncle: but do you hear nothing about our moving into the country?"

"Why, thinks I," replied Hannacott, "now all the promotions and things is got over, we may expect orders every day about it; but no, all the talk for every so long has been about this dinner, and nothing else."

"Oh, true," said Hugh, recollecting himself; "to-day, I vow. Is it a great assembly with ladies?"

"No ladies, as I hear of," returned John. "Ah, sir! I do verily believe that my Lady Essex, and the grandee folk that's got about my lord's sister, is the cause why we are all kept in London. My dear young master," added Hannacott, with an altered voice, "it makes me happy that you know and care so little about 'em. My lady baroness is one of the family. Lord bless the family! bless you all! But as for that Lord of Rochester, and the Lady Essex, and that other black dog, take a stupid old servant's advice, and have nothing to do with them: I don't like 'em, Master Hugh—Sir Hugh, that is."

Mondomer's attention was sensibly attracted by these few words; but, before he could reply, the peer's voice was heard calling for Hannacott, and in accents which implied that he had already roared in vain for some time; a circumstance that necessarily and immediately put an end to the conversation. My Lord Mondomer was ready dressed by two in the afternoon, to receive his guests. First, arrived the General Stanley, and his eldest son, James. Then, young Edward Alfreton, son of the Earl of Nantwich, an officer of no great military experience, but much distinction in the politer circles. The next was no less a personage than my lord high treasurer, the Earl of Suffolk himself; and after him came in an ecclesiastic of the name of Buttingall, a man of well-known and established family, though from that advantage the accident of being born a younger brother prevented his reaping any other benefit than a fair reception in good society; which birth, at that time of day, ensured in a much higher degree than it does now. At the age of fifty, this reverend

person had been accommodated with considerable church preferment in the metropolis, and he vacated, in consequence, a fellowship at one of the principal colleges of Oxford, which seat of learning had been his chief residence, his home, indeed, for more than twenty years before. Hugh Mondomer entered the saloon at the same time with Dr. Buttingall. For about half an hour Lord Mondomer kept things going admirably; but by degrees appeared to grow uneasy, and at length took care it should be known that, though the Lords Rochester, and Nortonborough the treasurer's cousin, were both expected, it was only the former whose want of punctuality could have detained my lord the minister, one instant from his dinner. Things now grew serious—conversation languished—Lord Suffolk answered only in monosyllables, and made no original observations, but such as either directly or consequentially, tended to explain, and indeed considerably enhance, the value of his time; which time, nevertheless, happened to be, on

that evening, as much at his command, as that of young Stanley, or Hugh, was at their disposal. The clock struck three, four, and five! The baron was really in a most pitiable state: he could not order the dinner to be served, because of the two——He had rather disoblige the treasurer than the favourite; but his irritation nearly got the better of him. He spoke sharply and short to his nephew, scolded the servants, and became utterly unfit for colloquial efforts, which were yet more than ever indispensable; when he was relieved from part of his misery by a discussion between young Alfreton and Buttingall, which all the company, (except the Earl of Suffolk, who appeared studiously inattentive,) were reduced to listen to. It was produced by a wretched daub, purporting to be a portrait of St. Benedict, that hung up in one corner of the saloon, whom the divine stigmatized as a fanatic, and extended that opprobrious term to all solitary recluses that ever existed.

Now, the officer, whether from perverseness or a real wrong quarter in his understanding,

thought fit to qualify his admission of that doctrine with this reservation; that there were establishments then flourishing in England, which were as little serviceable, either to religion or society, as the wildest retreats of hermits in Africa, or elsewhere; and that it mattered not much, in his opinion, whether a man withdrew to a desert, and lived upon roots; or whether, being equally useless, he came regularly to dinner in a college hall, upon beef and ale. On that topic, it is probable he would have exhibited an infinite fund of pleasantry, novelty, and wit, had it not been for the vehement interruption of the doctor, with a louder voice, and more imposing manner, who undertook to show—first, the true description of our establishments for learning, at Oxford; secondly, how far the intentions of their founders had been carried into effect; thirdly, that even, in their own days of ignorance, the anchorets were of no service to real piety; and fourthly, with respect to living on roots——But just then the great bell in the court rang an exquisitely

delightful peal to all assembled; and Rochester, accompanied by his ally, entered the room with the most undaunted composure. Little explanation did the viscount deign to make, and no sort of apology, beyond the mere statement, that they had been riding with the king since the court broke up. The banquet now ensued in earnest, and was hardly concluded, when my lord treasurer, who had been mortified and sullen throughout, took his departure.

"I have known my coz. better company," observed Nortonborough: "what has offended him? He surely did not think we could return earlier."

"I fear he might not have been aware of your engagement with his majesty at all," said Lord Mondomer.

"And who cares what he thought?" said Rochester, who was himself in no very charming temper: "he has as much pomp, to the full, as capacity; and, I vow, has left his 'treasurer's staff' behind him."

At this sally there was an universal laugh, it

appearing that the earl had, in fact, left his usual staff, or walking-stick, for he moved feebly from a rheumatic complaint, in the hall where they dined.

" Why, 'tis a crutch," said Alfreton.

" Give it to me," cried Lord Mondomer. " Save us all! it must be sent back this very evening. Hand it over—this way."

A silence followed, which was broken by Lord Mondomer asking Alfreton, whether 'twas his uncle, or great-uncle, who had been the intimate friend and patron of Bishop Hooper?

" Oh, great-uncle, my lord, if not a step farther back. Poor old Master Saintlow! he had to run for it; and when fire and faggot was all over, did not live six months to enjoy himself."

" I should have thought," observed Hugh, " that the death of Bishop Hooper, who, as I hear, was more than three-quarters of an hour alive in the flames, might have convinced them that cruel executions would never serve their purpose. If any thing could have

terrified the reformists out of their religion, such a spectacle as that must."

"This is admirable canary, my lord," said Nortonborough, replenishing his silver goblet.

"People talk more about those times of Queen Mary than they understand," said Rochester, willing to make light of young Mondomer: "in many respects the days of popery were preferable to these we live in: the old system was a support to the crown, and its practice no restraint upon the enjoyments of society. Now we have little else than hypocrisy and grimace, with Brownists, Puritans, and I know not what rude and mischievous sects."

Dr. Buttingall was enchanted! he never could even have hoped that in such a company the conversation would have taken such a direction.

"True, my good lord," he exclaimed; "and how should it be otherwise, when even the established clergy are, in great measure, composed of schismatics? I will undertake

to demonstrate that the discipline of the Church of England is at an end, and that a factious, intriguing, and, as your lordship shrewdly says, hypocritical party, has been rife from the very first days of our late monarch. Nor am I inclined to allow the exception that is claimed in favour of Travers: he was, to be sure, a regular man in his habits; but, as to the controversy between him and Hooker —— I shall come to that by and by."

This intimation convinced Rochester, who was sufficiently impatient before, that no time was to be lost; and he cut the doctor short with—" No doubt, no doubt: you, sir, must be as competent a judge of these matters, I should think, as any country-bred young man of a heated imagination."

Hugh was hurt at this rudeness, which could not be mistaken.

" You will recollect, my lord," said he, " that I have not contradicted you. I know little of the sects you mention. As to Robert Brown, indeed, the founder of one of them,

I verily believe that he was a wrong-headed man; spoilt by his admirers, of scanty knowledge, and a vain and insolent temper."

Something either in the terms or tone of this answer produced an instant effect upon Rochester's countenance; and to prevent any thing unpleasant, General Stanley observed: —

"But surely, Sir Hugh, a great proportion of the Puritans come very much under your description of Brown; and what can be expected but future misery and disorder, from those who make their religion an instrument for carrying points in this world?"

"I entirely agree with you, sir," replied Hugh, "if their principles be at all what you have stated them."

"And does any body," said Rochester, "any body, I mean, who is qualified to give an opinion, doubt, that ambition is always at the bottom of pretences to more righteousness than our neighbours — and, indeed, superiors?"

"I, my lord," answered Hugh, "do take

the liberty to say, that if there is a matter to be found in which superiority of station ought not at all to be considered, it is to be totally disregarded upon the subject we are talking of. I repeat, that I know nothing of these Puritans, who may be hypocritical, or may not. But if the leading persons in either church or state shall say, we are righteous enough, and whoever exceeds us, or differs from us, is to be denounced as a dangerous and bad man; that I call the spirit of persecution; that was the very jealousy and original intolerance of the Pharisees of old."

"Pish! shaw! that won't hold for a moment!" cried Nortonborough. "My dear lord, you are undoubtedly right, and we are obliged by your warning against cant and ill intentions. I must say, Sir Hugh, that your opposition to his lordship is most extraordinary, and your argument—oh! really, but an unhappy effort."

"Perhaps so; but what *was* my argument, Lord Nortonborough?"

"Argument! what! why about the Pha-

risees and Sadducees, and I never heard a weaker."

"Did your lordship comprehend every former argument you may have heard, as well as you appear to do this?"

"My Lord Mondomer," said Nortonborough, with a struggle to seem cool and composed, "your nephew has, I fancy, drank deeper than he is accustomed to. Young gentleman, if your object is to persuade us that you are a sounder divine than not only an eminent professor in company, but my excellent friend, Lord Rochester, and we all know who was his lordship's instructor! if that be your aim, I can only say," with a forced laugh, "you must get some greater ass than myself to establish your point upon."

"If I can find one," replied Hugh, who had now certainly lost his usual patience and civility.

Nortonborough looked disconcerted; but Rochester broke in with some imperious language, of which the words insolence, for-

wardness, and should not be suffered to sit in his company, were alone audible.

"I have not been used to such treatment," said Hugh, with much emotion; "as to sitting in your company, I pledge my word of honour, that the circumstance of this being the house of my own relation, is the only thing that prevents my driving your lordship from the table instantly, with violence and disgrace."

Long before their heat had come to this pass, Lord Mondomer had exhausted every variety of short exclamation, frowns, winks, and signs, in vain upon his nephew, to induce him to desist: at length the peer pushed himself low in his chair, and stretched forth his leg to attract Hugh's attention by absolutely kicking him, but could not reach so far: he then looked about him in despair, and discerned with rapture, at his feet, the treasurer's staff, as it had been called. This instrument was forthwith put in requisition; and at the moment of Hugh's last retort, when several of

the party opposite had crowded in close together, Rochester and Hugh with fury in their looks, Nortonborough with officiousness, and some of the others with zeal to interpose. The baron aimed a sharp back-handed blow in the direction, as he thought, of his nephew's leg.

"Confound it all!" bellowed Nortonborough, as he started up and danced about the hall, cursing and swearing. "What is the meaning of this? Are you all drunk, or distracted, or what? How am I to understand this usage?"

With the most profound apologies Lord Mondomer assured him that the blow was an unhappy mistake, and meant as a hint to his own nephew.

"Hint! do you call it? I positively believe my shin is laid open to the bone; but indeed, my lord, you should take more care; such an accident is vastly disagreeable; so absurd, as well as painful."

Rochester had now risen. He quitted the house with little ceremony or civility, and was

followed by all the rest: and Lord Mondomer, soon discovering that Hugh was not in a state to be lectured, being, indeed, inflamed with wine and indignation in a very unusual degree, left him undisturbed for that night.

CHAPTER IX.

Before six in the morning Hugh was up and walking in the garden; he remembered, indistinctly, what had passed the preceding evening, though he was, on the whole, well aware that a very serious trial awaited him. His principles seemed to require a line of conduct that his utmost strength of mind was hardly equal to, and those principles Hugh had never been in the practice of accommodating to every worldly convenience. Lord Mondomer seeing him as he paced backwards and forwards, was dressed himself with far greater expedition than usual, in consequence. He soon made his appearance on the terrace, and thus accosted his nephew:

"The more I consider my caution in not talking to you last night, after the company had broken up, the more I am satisfied with it; for you really were in a condition which precluded any advantage to yourself, or ease

of mind to me, by the discussion: truly, Hugh, you have not altogether the command over yourself that I hoped and expected: I have never known you drink so freely before."

"It is not my habit, sir; and I now feel feverish, dissatisfied, and altogether sufficiently uncomfortable."

"What is over cannot be remedied; and the doubt is, how you are to act now," said Lord Mondomer: "my dear boy, as a man of the world, I must tell you, that if he considers you of sufficient importance, you are to expect a challenge from Lord Rochester."

"You cannot, sir, be more entirely aware of that than I am, and I think—I have made up my mind upon the subject."

"Yes, no doubt, as all hot-brained young men are ready to do; but I am sadly uneasy and afflicted about it."

"You mistake me, uncle: I have resolved, if I can keep the resolution, that nothing in this world shall induce me to enter upon a deliberate duel."

"Hey! how! I don't understand—"

"The subject is painful, sir, and I will not be long: the religious duty in which I was instructed and established by my father, calls upon me not to deny the Author of that religion before men: now all trial, arising from ordinary persecution, is at an end in this land; but the customs of society may be unchristian, and the proof of our fidelity of a different description from heretofore: to the best of my understanding these voluntary revengeful meetings are contrary to the letter of an express commandment, and to the spirit of them unquestionably, if not to the very verbal injunctions of our Saviour and his Apostles, throughout the sacred volume."

"But stay," cried Lord Mondomer, "I hardly — now Hugh, consider, I am in a distressing situation; what you say has often struck me; I have a great reverence for the reformed faith; you know I have; but then there is an inviolable law among gentlemen — why a young man who refused a challenge would be expelled for ever from society."

"He most certainly would, sir, as society is now constituted; and I should feel it acutely, very bitterly indeed, and would rather, oh! how much rather! go to the stake in resistance of a corrupt religion, than be scorned, ridiculed, and neglected through life, as I am likely to be: but the question is, God, or man. I am resolved; and my only doubt is, whether I shall be able to keep to my determination."

"Well, I don't know," said his uncle; "but supposing you to have grossly offended my Lord Rochester."

"If I have been intemperate in insulting him, I must, however it may gall me, make due concessions; but to the best of my remembrance I was injuriously treated, and provoked beyond endurance."

"My dearest Hugh, you are a good, and well I know, a brave youth as any now living; but this will not do; my poor brother brought you up with strange notions: bless me, you have no conception of the insolence of such a man as Rochester! why, any gentleman who

shunned his call to the field, he would be likely to visit with personal degradation, even assault."

"Would he so? No, you don't mean it," cried Hugh, while his eyes glistened: "I have a good right to defend myself; and that, indeed, might set all clear; but such an opportunity, such good fortune, it would be too much to expect: he will better know how to compass my ruin in this world, and I must be prepared for the worst."

However, it so happened that King James had already received intimation of the misunderstanding at Lord Mondomer's; and as, even independently of his care for his favourite, he mortally hated all appeals to arms, public or private, no time was lost in providing against its probable consequences: not that Rochester had given this intelligence, for we will deal fairly by him: he had just as much courage as was requisite to satisfy the demands of society, and felt that after the threat he had received, something must be done: his only doubt was, whether young Mondomer was a fit

antagonist for one of his exalted station and grandeur; nor was it Alfreton, who thought the quarrel a nice, lively incident, and wished it to take its course; nor Buttingall, who suspected Hugh of differing in opinion from him upon points about which he (the doctor) must know best, and thereupon set him down for a coxcomb, and had no objection to his getting into a scrape. But the Stanleys were right-headed people; and the general, who had been used all his life to affairs of this sort, saw directly that he could put an end to every inconvenience, without compromising either of the parties. Before they slept, therefore, he and his son took such steps as brought an officer from his majesty to Lord Mondomer's during the discourse which we have just related, who, with the utmost courtesy, informed the parties engaged therein, that Hugh was to be considered as his prisoner, acquainting them at the same time, that the Viscount Rochester was likewise under arrest. Lord Mondomer concealed, with consummate address, his rapture at this intelligence, and saying, with

a grave face, that his majesty's commands must be submitted to; added something personally civil to the gentleman who brought them.

Hugh bowed in silence; he even doubted whether his sincerity did not require him to explain to the officer (a total stranger) what his resolution had been before this interposition of the king; but even if that were his duty, which may appear questionable, we must freely confess that such an effort of self-devotion and magnanimity was beyond a young man not yet twenty-one, and he quietly followed the others into the house.

Lord Mondomer was given to understand, in the progress of the day, from high authority, that his nephew's continuance in the metropolis might be dispensed with just at present; and his sister hinted to him, that a course of foreign travel would be the best measure to render Hugh acquainted with mankind, clear away his prejudices, and get rid of the impracticable part of his disposition; which the lady declared to be so offensive to her, that till

there was a greater change in that respect than she saw any reason to expect, she should withdraw all notice from him, and concern about him. To his lordship's vehement remonstrances against such neglect of a young man, who, as he truly said, was a credit to his family, and likely to promote the honour and welfare of any connexion to which he might belong, the baroness returned no kind of answer: indeed the subject of her nephew having been dismissed from her thoughts, which were then otherwise occupied, she had not adverted to a single sentence of the peer's harangue.

Hugh appeared to like the proposal well enough, and made preparations with great alacrity, when his uncle informed him there was a necessity for proceeding to France directly from London, and in as short a time as could possibly be contrived. The last day of July, within a week of the time when Hugh received this communication, was determined upon for the moment of his departure, and on that very day he did certainly leave his uncle's house, but not in the direction of the French

coast; for King James, with his usual shrewd ness, suspecting every thing, and providing against dangers that were not, in the remotest degree, likely to happen, took it into his head that nothing could be intended by Hugh's going abroad, but an uninterrupted meeting with his minion, Rochester; and as measures had been decisively taken against the possibility of such an occurrence while they both remained in England, the continental expedition was positively forbidden, without any reason assigned, and Hugh ordered to repair to his uncle's seat in the north.

"My dear boy," said the peer to our hero, the evening before he left London, "I was always sufficiently disposed to think well of you; but I must say, that during the six weeks we have been together, since your return from Cumberland, you have greatly risen in my regard; not that I agree with all your notions; I am not prepared to go that length, but will admit, like an honest man, as to some points in which we differ, that I am by no means without suspecting you may be in the

right, notwithstanding all my observation and knowledge of life: there is one thing, however, Hugh, in which I think it possible you may be led away by passion, and would do well to listen to my advice and opinion. I remember teasing you soon after you came here in a talk we had about the Harlandes." Hugh coloured, but looked very grave. " Now I knew all the time — to be sure I did, the state of your inclinations; but I doubt, my dear child, I doubt, indeed, whether it can do ; my projects for you were of a very different description, and my sister's ——"

" Be pleased, sir," said Hugh, hastily, " to confine yourself to your own wishes and plans with regard to me, and depend upon it they shall ever be attended to."

" Now that's dutiful, Hugh ; that's kind, I say ; ay, and sensible too ; for if your happiness was really at stake, do you suppose that I would cross your desire of marrying into so respectable and excellent a family, the daughter, too, of my faithful, old, honest friend ? But you are too young to think of such a pro-

ceeding: I could not at present make any arrangements for it; and you may confidently believe me, Hugh, (though I know you will not) when I tell you that the loves of boys and girls scarcely twenty, are not matters of such importance as they imagine, even to themselves; and there never was yet an instance in this world where both parties were not well-pleased that such nonsense was put an end to within fifteen months afterwards, and they prevented from hampering themselves for life. Well, now come; which of the girls is it?"

"Really, sir, that seems rather an odd way of putting a question on so delicate a subject——."

"The eldest, isn't it? — Blanche?"

"I certainly have the highest value for Blanche Harlande, my lord."

"Look ye, Hugh, you are nearly of age, and if you were younger, I pretend not to impose commands on a lad of your worth and understanding; but you will oblige me by remaining at Mondomer, by not going westward of it at least — you comprehend me —

till I come down myself; which I suppose must happen, at the latest, within three weeks of this time."

"I give you my word, uncle, that you shall be obeyed: indeed, I know not that any body would be particularly overjoyed to see me (added he, in a melancholy and dissatisfied tone) if I were to go to Belton."

The peer was surprised at this ready acquiescence; but it was not his game to express any astonishment, so he made no reply, and they passed to other topics.

CHAPTER X.

Even to those whose element a populous city may, with no impropriety, be called; whose chief gratifications not only consist in the society, bustle, amusements, and competitions of such a scene, but whose graver hopes and schemes are all connected with it; even by such persons, the first change from crowded, gloomy streets, and oppressive rooms, to free space, pure air, serenity and verdure, during the finest season of the year, is generally admitted to be well enough for variety; and, indeed, is apt to have, sometimes to the extent of ten days, or a fortnight, very considerable charms in their eyes. How might it then have been expected to exhilarate the spirits of our hero, who came up, originally, to the metropolis against his will; and the gratification of whose vanity, when there, by no means compensated for the necessary alteration in all his habits that was forced upon him. Did

he ride on gallantly and happily; now enjoying, not, indeed, the beauties of the surrounding scenery, for, if possible, fewer were to be observed upon his road to Northumberland, at that period, than we are now accustomed to in the same direction; but the sight of those rural images and occupations to which, for some weeks, he had been a stranger? Did he proceed, now conversing in easy cheerfulness with such travellers as he might overtake, and now engaged in delightful reveries of his own? We are concerned to say, much otherwise. Reveries of his own, indeed, were pretty plentifully indulged; the only doubt is, how far they were delightful. On the contrary, a course of painful reflections, which had been lately kept under, first, by the tumult of his own various engagements, and afterwards by suspicion and uneasiness about one of his nearest relations, now pressed upon his mind; and one evening, we are not precisely certain in which day's journey it was, at some distance, however, from Derby to the northward, he took out, and began to reperuse a

letter that he *happened* to have about him, which he had read three times on the preceding day, and (after a solemn determination to look at it no more,) once that morning already. It ran to this effect.

"Dear Hugh,

"There is always uncertainty, I know, and, at any rate, so much irregularity as to the time of our receiving letters from London at this immense distance, that I was not disappointed or uneasy, (not much, at least), when none came from you till a fortnight, all but two days, after your leaving Belton. Nor did I mind, I assure you, Hugh, the joking and teasing of my sisters, who said you had forgot me—forgot us all,—that is to say, amongst the great people, and fine sights, and fine court ladies. Now such sort of jesting is not very pleasant, and what I do not think I should have practised towards them; though, perhaps I might. But if any thing vexed me, it was my dear father's shaking his head, as if he did not think you would write at all; and saying something in a confused way, as he sometimes does, you know, Hugh, which seemed to me like a doubt, whether, if you did write, I ought to send you any letter in return.

But he couldn't mean that; and I'm sure I don't understand what he did mean. So, when your letter arrived, at last, it made amends for every thing, and I found it was dated on the very next day after you got to Sir Simon's. I shall not pretend to deny that it was excessively entertaining; and then the friendship and affection of it made me so happy! that I have been in good spirits ever since. I was somewhat uncomfortable before; partly, because I was so curious to know whether you had got safe to London, and partly from a very odd thing that happened to me on the fourth day after you went away. You must know, Hugh, that I was walking without my sisters in that same path, by the side of the water, which, I am sure, you very well remember. It was a cloudy, dull day, and I thought it best to keep near home, because it might rain every minute. I had not walked far, when I saw a man before me, a little way out of the path, leaning upon some hurdles. As I came near, he walked on. Now no one would have thought of remarking him, but for his dress; which was different from the peasantry around, for he had a long wrapping kind of cloak, all loose about him. Well; I went on further than I had intended, and while I was thinking of any thing in the universe

but him, this figure suddenly turned, passed quick by me, and, planting himself in the walk between me and the way home, seized me by the arm, and looked me full in the face! I never in my life, Hugh, saw such a hideous, ill-favoured wretch: pale as a corpse, and such a horrid expression when he began to speak: I really don't quite like to think it over. He said something of this sort, but, perhaps, not the very words: 'Such miserable chattering, or babbling,' or some such word, 'has been your ruin. You are in his, or our, way; and, by the powers of h—ll! what must be done, may as well be done now!' at the same time he grasped me so tight, that, what with that and my surprise, I did not move, or, I believe, speak. But while he went on in this manner, some people came towards us, practising their psalm-singing, as loud as they could, two or three together; and then the man, with a vehement oath, splashed through the water, and was off in a moment on the other side. Now, Hugh, I actually was not so much frightened at all this till afterwards: it was more astonishment, that any body should behave so, hereabouts, to one of our family. Upon my word, I should almost have believed, from his look and manner, that he meant to put me to death: but he had no knife, or any weapon, in his

hand, nor any sword on, that I saw. Those who were singing proved to be old Griffith, and two of the men that work for Saunders. They were immensely surprised and indignant, I must say; and the two younger crossed the water, to look for him, while I made Griffith conduct me home. He told me that, by my description, he had no doubt it was the same man who had been lately seen by his son, and twice by somebody else, in the parson's fields, at midnight, sometimes raving and sometimes as if whispering—but all alone; and they considered him to be a madman, which I dare say he is. Margaret and Elinor were never told of this, it would have terrified them so; and my poor father was in great uneasiness for some time. People here, for an entire week, at least, have been hunting over the whole country, far and near, to seize him; but not a soul has seen or heard of him since. I hope, however, you do not think me more weak and timid than my neighbours, or that my life is to be discomposed by such an event as this, strange as it is, and what will probably never be explained. I think no more of it; and, indeed, Hugh, I must confess, that any circumstance which could have kept me uneasy, after your nice and very kind letter arrived, must have been a bitter one indeed."

Then, after many particular messages from Sir Giles and the sisterhood, and a wish intimated, on the part of the writer, to hear from him again, (for which there was no reason expressed, but because he must see so much and have so much to say), the letter was concluded, and subscribed by his

"Ever true friend,
"BLANCHE HARLANDE."

What sensations of pleasure, astonishment, and alarm this epistle at first excited in our hero, may be well imagined. That the being who had thus menaced Blanche was the same person whom he saw and talked with the night before he quitted Belton, there could be no doubt: but Hugh had afterwards other suspicions upon that subject. Three times, since the receipt of her's, did he write full, affectionate, and, the two last, even passionate letters, not unaccompanied with gentle reproaches, to Belton; but not one syllable of answer had he obtained, at which, though we

had no fair opportunity of mentioning it before, it is most certain that he was first restless, then low, then angry, and, since the commencement of this expedition, when his thoughts had scope for dwelling upon it, something very like seriously unhappy. At this part of the journey the road became more interesting and pleasant to our hero, though not to his horse. The ascents increased to formidable hills, and the country grew rude and rough. He was now upon an extensive moor, scantily, at first, sprinkled over with underwood, which became thicker and thicker as he advanced, till he found himself in a sort of wilderness, intersected by different roads, from which the principal northern track could not easily be distinguished. Having inquired of his servant, who had often made the journey before, how far he conceived it to be to Winster, where it was intended to pass the night,—upon his report, Hugh judged it unnecessary to proceed with any such alacrity as should disturb his own reflections. The evening was so pro-

foundly still, that any noise, from almost whatever distance, readily reached his ear. He listened—it was soothing and gratifying—to the lowing of cattle in the valley, and endeavoured, as the hum floated in the air, to catch more distinctly the lulling sounds of a rookery. Other noises, however, soon interfered with this agreeable occupation: the whoop! and hollo! of the human species was plainly heard; and, at the same time, a beating of hoofs upon the turf, as from men riding hard. The cry now became quite distinct.

"Round there—round: between the thicket, and—get round him: he's a sorcerer—a sorcerer. Stop the dog."

And before Hugh could see from whence these voices proceeded, a man rode furiously towards him, just where the road was most contracted by thorns and other shrubs. He came forward with a naked sword, no covering upon his head, his dress flying about him in disorder, and a black mask, or black cloth drawn entirely over his face. That circum-

stance determined Hugh, who had little time for consideration, to interfere.

" Quit my path!" said the stranger, " or I'll fell you to the earth!"

Hugh rode full in the way; and the other, without a word more, dashed at him, aiming, at the same instant, a blow with the sword, that narrowly missed our young friend. The horses rushed together!—Mondomer's was driven, staggering, into the bushes, and the man's, upon that rebuff, turned short at once, so that his rider had to make some efforts to get his head round again. Hugh, with hand and spur together, brought his horse up, and sprung to his former position, with his falchion drawn in his hand. He was making signals for a parley, when the other attacked him for the second time, and, after a feint to strike, gave a deadly thrust at his body, which passed through two folds of his cloak, and was warded off by his left arm. Mondomer raised himself in the stirrups, and struck, with all the force he was master of, at the man who had

overreached himself: the blow took effect upon his head, and brought him to the ground, where he lay without motion. At this period, Ned, at a brisk pace, came up to his side, and the noises increased around him, though no one else was yet to be seen for the bushes.

"Where have you been all this time?" said Hugh to his servant; and then cut short an answer about a stone in his horse's foot, by desiring him to watch his fallen foe, while he rode forward for explanation of these strange events. After proceeding about fifty yards, he came upon more open and unencumbered ground, and was immediately addressed by three men, one of whom wound a horn, and as many more quickly joined the party. They asked, several at once, whether Hugh had seen any body; and upon his describing the appearance of the person who assailed him, and the struggle that had taken place, he who was evidently the chief of the group thanked him briefly, but with much earnestness; adding, "Let me beg of you, sir, to conduct us, without loss of time, to the spot where you have

left him. Plague on the old dog! to think that he should so baffle us."

"Old!" said Hugh; "was it an old man that you were after?"

"By his look one would have sworn it," replied the other; "but I guess he is something very different from what he seems to be. Not badly mounted either—and in the heart of this infernal underwood, well might we have lost him for good and all, but for the accident of his falling in with this gentleman."

A loud shout, or shriek, was now heard from Ned, and, Mondomer showing the way, they all entered the thicket, where they found his servant standing, in apparent dismay, and holding his own horse by the bridle. Neither horse nor man were to be seen beside him.

"What's the meaning of all this?" cried Mondomer, hastily: "where is he who lay upon the ground here?"

"Indeed, your honour, I'm sadly vexed: but you can't be far from him. He lay quite

still; so, thinks I, if I don't hear him breathe, he's certainly dead: so I down'd with my ear, and he never breathed, sure enough; and while I took account of that, away breaks his horse all through the brambles like; and thinks I, its a pity to lose the nag, and up I was to gallop after him, when the fellow moved, and crawled along upon his belly, just like a great snake; and before I was off again, and could get down there, being hampered with the horse, and one thing or another, he crawled under that holly bush."

"Which? here? this way? this large bush?" were vehemently demanded by many of those assembled.

"There's his horse, I swear, my lord; there's the horse!" cried one of the attendants; and at some distance the steed was seen plunging amongst the copse, with one leg over the bridle, which dangled upon the ground.

"Deuce take the horse," said the principal; "mind the caitiff himself! Get round this

tree, quite opposite to us: now in on every side—in boys!"

They accordingly beat about with the utmost perseverance, first in the direction pointed out by Ned, and afterwards in every other around them, till the sun went down, without the slightest success on their part; and they came to a conference at last, wearied and disconcerted.

The sword which the man had borne—a strait, broad weapon, sharp on both sides, was found upon the grass; it had been forced from his hand by the violence of the fall, and lay at some distance off. Mondomer smartly reproved Ned for his negligence.

"He be badly hurt—that's my notion, sir," said the servant; "'ull die somewhere among they copses."

"That is far from being my wish, and I doubt it much," returned Hugh; "there's no blood upon my falchion, and I thought, at the time, he was not fairly struck with the edge of it. And now, sir," addressing himself to the

leading stranger, "may I beg for some explanation of this whole adventure?"

"You have a good right to demand one, sir," answered the other; "but it will be some while in the telling. How far from hence were you intending to proceed to-night?"

"I thought to have reached Winster."

"Nine long miles yet at the very least; and my own journey southward has been likewise impeded by all this. 'Tis every thing but pitch dark, and I should propose our taking possession of a coarse, rough sort of house — a house of entertainment rather for horse than man, close here, in the neighbourhood. Beds will be out of all question; but we may get something to eat, and shall have a roof over our heads while we converse together."

With this proposal Hugh thought it best to agree; and the superiors, riding forward, were followed by Mondomer's man and the stranger's attendants, now six in number, having been joined, towards the conclusion of their fruitless search, by an additional servant, whose own

clothes as well as all the forepart of his horse, which went lame, were soiled with dirt and wet. In this order they arrived at the Crown and Thistle, either an absolute pothouse, or an inn of the most paltry description.

CHAPTER XI.

The master of the house soon made his appearance, cap in hand, surrounded by a knot of women of various ages: but upon receiving information that so numerous and grand a company meant nothing short of actually passing the night at his house, he was so bewildered, that the ready promise of every imaginable accommodation, which was at his tongue's end when he came to the door, now stuck in his throat: he could only express, in hesitating accents, a hope that he might be able to satisfy their graces. Three great louts of the more robust sex were now summoned from their work in the fields, (for mine host, it seems, added the creditable occupation of a farmer upon a small scale, to that of an inn-keeper), who were shortly after busied in the cavalry department; and outhouses of every description were converted into stables, with a

promptitude that showed much experience and consummate address in such transformations.

The kitchen, a paved and vaulted apartment, was in an instant filled with the domestics, to the great annoyance of the landlord, his wife, who acted as cook, and all the subordinate ministers of his establishment: meanwhile Mondomer, with the principal cavalier of the other party, took possession of the airiest and largest room above stairs, the wainscotting of which was oak, with a huge grotesque carved chimney-piece.

Three miserable beds, 'covered with rugs of divers colours, and a stained deal table, with two benches of very unequal length, composed the furniture; some tattered remnants of hangings were likewise remaining; for this edifice, incommodious as it was in almost every conceivable point, had, something less than fifty years before, been the chief mansion of a landholder with no mean property. The question now was, what could be procured for supper? and to their inquiries on that subject, such answers were given, as convinced them

both, that out of a considerable choice offered to their pleasure, they were intended to confine themselves to kid, which accordingly was served up.

It proved tough, swimming in grease, and in all respects execrable, which neither surprised or discomposed them; and with the aid of eggs, hard biscuits, harder cheese, and aqua vitæ (the common name then for spirituous liquors of every kind), they made a very sufficient meal.

"By my faith," said the stranger, when the wrecks of this splendid feast lay scattered before them, "our friend here of the crown and thistle does his fare injustice; that meat, if called by its proper name, foal, might have merited something like commendation; as kid, we can't say much for it. And now, Sir Hugh Mondomer, perhaps it is full time that we became acquainted with each other: nay, don't be astonished; I have discovered you without the assistance of art magic, by means of my own attendants simply, to whom your man has been rather communicative. To some of

your family, Sir Hugh, I am by no means unknown; though it is likely that my name has been but sparingly mentioned before you, in that society where the Lady de Lyle holds so considerable a part. Of all people in existence I conceive the Earl of Essex would be least acceptable amongst that amiable and select body of friends."

"It is the Lord Essex, then, whom I have the honour of addressing," said Hugh.

"Even so; and the accident that has thrown us together will oblige me to talk to you without formality or reserve. My countess, I take it for granted, you are intimate with, and perhaps already understand the character of so wise, mild, and sensitive a personage."

Hugh bowed, and contented himself with answering that he had the honour of some acquaintance with her ladyship; for judging from what he knew in common with all who had any footing at court, and, indeed, most other people, he conceived the subject to be a

very awkward and unplesant one, and just the last upon the face of the earth that he himself should have thought of introducing.

" I shall soon convince you," continued the earl, in a tone of much unconcern and gaiety, " that you need not be guarded or distressed by your answers. My feelings, upon this matter at least, are somewhat less delicate than they formerly were. His present majesty, in his paternal goodness and gratitude, as he was pleased to term it, toward the house of Devereux, could not rest till he had projected a match between the Lady Frances Howard and myself, at a time when I was a child of fourteen, and she younger. No sooner was this notable point carried, than I proceeded for the continent, from whence I have not long since returned. You are a very young man, Sir Hugh, and will easily understand what an agreeable range I had for my thoughts during the first year or so of my travels. That I should be a lover, was absolutely necessary: I was one. That my affections should be

suitably bestowed was indispensable. Could they be more so than to a damsel of the mighty stock of the Howards, and she the most bewitching young creature about the court? To some persons, I grant you, checks and difficulties in the pursuit of such an object would have greatly advanced the interest of it; that may perhaps be your opinion," (Mondomer smiled and shook his head), "but it is not mine. To my indolent indulgence of imagination it was requisite that I should be a successful lover. And was I not? Had not the ceremonies of the church indissolubly united us before I quitted England? Was not my triumph attested by the most affecting and impassioned speeches, embraces, tears, vows, and fits? I give you my honour—fits!"

"My lord! my lord!" cried Mondomer, this must be too much; I assure you I am better acquainted than you suppose"—but, on looking up to the earl's countenance at that moment, Hugh perceived an evident complacency in his features, which proved, that so

far from being hurt at these recollections, he was highly tickled and pleased with his own method of telling the story.

His lordship went on: "Depend upon it, Sir Hugh, I can be of great use to you in a very important article to a young gentleman. You shall have all our love-letters, on both sides, up to the time of Carre's rise; for I've copies of my own — most of 'em, that is — and upon my soul I don't think them by any means bad. However, to cut the matter short: when her ladyship's correspondence grew scanty, and ardour of expression cooled, it occurred to me, that instead of cursing my stars, neglecting my meals, and worrying my heart out with conjectures, I would write to a sure friend in England, to know the real state of the case; and, upon his answer, was the less surprised at my return, to find my charming, but too susceptible lady upon such terms with this newly-discovered treasure! this Rochester! as were neither soothing to my tenderness, nor flattering to one's vanity."

"To say the truth," replied Hugh, "as

your lordship has been so explicit with me, I will take the liberty of adding, that there are some individuals upon whom tenderness would be utterly thrown away; and who, if they have power to distress us at all, can only do it by mortifying our vanity. I am glad to find your lordship so free from that weakness."

"No, no; you are wrong there: free from it! nobody less. It does not, indeed, take the turn of making me uneasy as to the conduct of the Right Honourable the Countess of Essex: but you observe it keeps me from the court, where present circumstances would add but little to my dignity."

"Your lordship was travelling southward, I think," observed Hugh.

"From an estate in the bishopric, which I have visited only once before, in — let me see: however, your question, Sir Hugh, reminds me that I have much more to tell you. You are not weary though: I suppose in our clothes we might venture to lie down upon those beds, filthy as they seem to be."

"Not in the least weary, I assure you, my

lord: besides, if I was, my curiosity would rouse me."

"Have at you, then," quoth the peer; "the night is before us. But stay one instant, till I have trimmed the lamp. What sort of composition do you take this oil to be? There, it might be better; but little light suffices to talk by.—Every man, Sir Hugh Mondomer, is more apt to be guided by accident in his opinions and principles than he likes to own. You must have heard what a serious turn my father took a short time before his death: he believed himself sincere; and so he was in the main I think, and hope for his sake; but cannot help surmising, that, as his disgust to the queen first made him court the fanatical party, he was in the habit of pretending to swallow every sort of imposture to flatter them. All this cant produced in me a conduct directly the reverse; for the credulity of some of them, and impudent knavery of others, led me, I own it, to a contempt of many opinions held by the generality of mankind, and that have been maintained by wiser people than

myself, from one generation to another. In particular, because the puritanical sect, and their superstitious favourites in Scotland, held the practice of sorcery in abhorrence above all other crimes, I did partly disbelieve, and always most confidently deny, that any such crime existed. But may I be crushed on the wheel, Sir Hugh, if some events of late have not shaken my notions very materially. After a day of much exercise and exertion, I had just laid down in bed, and, between dreaming and waking, had an impression of a clamorous talking and shouting around me, when I was aroused by the information that a man lay without the moat, who had been thrown from his horse, and dangerously hurt. None of the peasants, they said, were at hand to convey him to the village, and could he be brought into the Priory, as my house is called—Sheraton Priory. What ensued you will readily imagine: the drawbridge was ordered to be lowered, and, with proper assistance, the person complaining brought into the hall. I never liked the look of a fellow less: his

manner, however, was far above the vulgar—even commanding, and his language that of a man of education. Well, there was no difficulty in accommodating him; a great rambling place the Priory, and but an incomplete establishment there at the time. He complained of his leg and side I think, but would neither take any of the slops and fomentations that my old housekeeper and others pressed upon him, nor hear of a surgeon: none, indeed, could have been procured in less than seven or eight hours. Something easier, next day, was the report, but out of all question his travelling yet. Sir Hugh, I am a cheerful, gregarious animal, and had worn my ruminations to the stump at that gloomy, solitary place, when this accident happened; so the fellow having established himself with me, the true philosophy, I thought, was to extract whatever interest or entertainment could be drawn from him. He was no jester; that one soon discovered: his powers did not lay that way. But you will easily believe he possessed the means of securing my attention,

when I tell you, that before we had three interviews, he showed himself as well acquainted with my affairs as I am myself. Of my wife he talked with a freedom which offended my pride, but with a truth and accuracy that was resistless: he gave me, as I know from infallible proofs, the most positive information as to her mind, present conduct, and future schemes."

Here Hugh broke in, asking, with eagerness and rapidity, four questions in a breath.

"Where did he come from? How happened he to be acquainted with the Lady Essex? Who did he turn out to be? Was he in reality so much hurt?"

"My dear sir, 'twill be no easy matter to satisfy you, unless your questions are marshalled with a little more regularity; but the last is extraordinary enough! What induced you to ask that?"

"Mere accident, I believe," said Mondomer, after some short consideration, "for I can know nothing of this person. You are well aware, my lord, of the extreme intimacy

between the Lady Essex and a relative of my own; it is natural, therefore, that I should be somewhat curious. Was he hurt by any fall?"

"This is odd enough," replied the earl; "but upon my credit and life, I believe he was not; for within a day or two he cast off the encumbrance of crutches, and not only rode, but walked, scrambled, and climbed where I did not greatly like to follow him. That, however, was the least remarkable part of his conduct, as you shall hear."

"Pray proceed, my lord," said Hugh.

"Though quite recovered, to all appearance, the fellow never proposed taking his departure: as to that, indeed, short work enough would have been made with him, but I had become more than ever desirous to get out all he knew, and bring him to some intelligible account of himself; which I could never do. In about a week, as I think, after he had fastened himself upon me in this way, one of my female domestics came crying into the housekeeper's

apartment, and soon worked herself up into a kind of hysterical transport. She seemed to have something upon her mind, which she was afraid to tell; and at length it was partly forced, and partly coaxed out of her, that she had seen a spirit! This tale, whatever noise it might make in the family, did not reach my ears till the following day, when two more of the maids, and a great, hulking, white-livered calf of an under-butler, said they must quit the Priory, it was impossible for 'em to stay under that roof any longer. Things, they said, went wrong in the house; and what language or nonsensical exaggeration soever they might adopt in talking to each other, neither I nor my housekeeper could get any thing further from them than, 'those was in the Priory as oughtn't to be there.' The housekeeper I knew to be a silly old dame: no good whatever in talking to her. But to a falconer of mine, who has been years in my service, a shrewd, bold fellow, I did open my mind in some degree, as we rode beyond

Shotton together that same morning. You observed one of my people, Sir Hugh, who came up all wet and dirty?"

"I noted him, my lord: he joined between the thicket and this place."

"Very well; that's the man. Says I, 'Ralph, what are all these stories that have frightened the servants so? Some of them, I do believe, will be fools enough to lose their employment.'—'And pray, my lord,' said he, in his northern twang and dialect, which I don't attempt to imitate, 'will you let me ask a question in my turn? Who, or what is that old figure that was brought into the Priory about a week ago—late at night?' Now, not to trouble you with what, indeed, I could not accurately remember—not to go through the whole of our dialogue, I soon collected from this man that the person I have been telling you of had incurred the suspicion (to say the least of it) of every individual about me, and alarmed them all, more or less. Some indeed, so Ralph informed me, were in such agonies, as night came on, that their distress was quite

pitiable; and I should be soon left without a single domestic, except two or three of the stoutest hearted amongst the men, who, with equal confidence of his hellish practices, had determined to see the thing out, to make me acquainted with it, and either deliver the wizard up to justice, or knock him on the head themselves. Shall I confess to you, Sir Hugh, that the old, hideous goblin (for he looked like a thing made up to frighten women and children) had gained some ascendant over me by his extraordinary language, deportment, and knowledge? He had even ventured to tell me, that I *must* consent to some measures which would be dictated by my wife, (that is to say, Rochester) and communicated by him. By him! the mean, old, loathsome scoundrel! And I neither kicked him, or ordered him to be dragged through the moat, out of my dwelling. But this narration (I'm no great orator in a general way) makes one thirsty. This is usquebaugh, to my belief; or rather was. What says Sir Hugh Mondomer to a reinforcement?"

"Don't you think the whole family must be at rest?"

"What! with our followers in possession of their kitchen! Oh, no, no:—here, host! master! what's your name? Host! I say."

That cautious and frugal character was at his post, sure enough, and the supply readily provided.

"Such a degree of assurance as your lordship last mentioned," said Mondomer, "would indeed have astonished me, if the story had not been so strange throughout. You brought the falconer to particulars I suppose?"

"To be sure; for, at the first, I told him, as I really thought, that the man's spectre-like face and out of the way dress, half like a friar and half like—the deuce knows what, had turned all their simple heads. But that wouldn't do. Ralph told me fairly not to deceive myself, for that I could not deceive them. 'Your lordship sleeps,' says he, 'far enough off, and hears nothing of it: but I, myself, when the women began to talk, and be terrified, and unhappy, I have gone, at all

hours of the night, to listen on purpose. What malice can I have against the old man? and why should I tell a lie about it, my lord? but from my own knowledge I will undertake to swear that he's never alone. Who it is along with him, I'll be crucified if I know; but some one is, that's certain. Will Shefford says he's seen the devil himself in his apartment. 'Tis time to look about you, my lord: Martha saw him try to mix some powder or other with the pottage for supper, and upon that he threw paper and all into the fire.' At this last communication I became entirely of my informer's opinion, and, returning straightway, assembled in the court this Will Shefford and other servants, both male and female. Shefford persisted in it, with every possible imprecation on his own head, if it were not true, that he had seen, when all the rest of the family were in bed, a dreadful apparition close to the stranger, as if talking with him, which vanished at his near approach. The door of the chamber was not shut to, and on entering, (for he had the hardihood to venture,) he per-

ceived the stranger with his eyes fixed and staring, his hands clenched, and evidently unconscious of where he was, or what was passing around him. This, and other similar accounts being given by various domestics, I ordered forthwith a couple of the men to be well armed and mounted. I should join them, I said; and directed horses to be immediately harnessed in a sort of light, covered cart. 'Many hours,' I added, 'will not pass over that fellow's head before he's safely lodged in the castle at Durham.' Now, perhaps, the most wonderful part of the whole is, that he who up to that hour had met the servants with an undaunted countenance, and rather sought than shunned me, obtruding his remarks in matters that it was the utmost degree of presumption for him to touch upon, neither awed by distance of manner, nor checked by positive rebuke; the dog! I say, had collected, from some quarter, through his secret alliance, information when he was actually in danger, and availed himself of it, for his apartment was empty; and from that time till this very day we never saw any

thing of him. Aye, and even now, as you can testify, his friend from below seems to have lent him a hand once more."

"Under what circumstances might your lordship fall in with him to-day?" said Mondomer.

"Quite unexpectedly! on my route into Essex. Ralph, who seems to have a talent for hunting him down, pointed out an object, clean off the road, riding upon the worst part of the moor. I did not, at first, think it was he; but was convinced of it when we came near him, pouring on from several quarters at once. His horse flew like the wind! We must have had him though, when he took the most desperate leap I have ever witnessed, over a deep ravine from the lower bank to the steeper. With difficulty he cleared it, and Ralph, horse, and man, came down in the attempt to follow, and 'twas a mercy he didn't break his neck. But he was near enough to strike the cap from his head, which the villain covered with something else, face and all, as it appeared to us. With that start he got

clear a-head. I have not the remotest doubt it was he, though his countenance could not be plainly seen; nor should I ever desire to see it again, but for the sake of bringing him to condign punishment."

The earl then ceased, finished his cup, and announced himself to be sleepy.

Mondomer was not particularly so, but extremely disposed for his own meditations upon all that had happened. Therefore, after some observations upon the narrative of Lord Essex, and exceedingly feeble attempts at more common-place chat when those observations were ended, they both agreed, that having three hours good for the refreshment of sleep, the civillest thing that either could do, would be to give the other an uninterrupted opportunity of enjoying it.

CHAPTER XII.

By the dawn of day the house was one entire scene of tumult, bustle, and preparation for departure; and the Earl of Essex, as well as our hero, having refreshed themselves by a plunge into a running stream in the meadows adjoining, took leave of each other with much courtesy, and many expressions of eagerness for further opportunities of improving their acquaintance.

The host being called upon for his charge, had the discretion and policy to avow his total ignorance as to what it might be proper to demand—never having had the high honour (as he declared over and over again) of even seeing, much less of entertaining, any of the first company in the kingdom before. He left the whole matter, therefore, to their lordships' generosity, by which, as may readily be imagined, he was any thing but a loser.

The peer and suite first quitted the yard.

As they ascended the hill that overhung the inn, Lord Essex ordered a blast of the horn to be sounded, and graciously saluted Hugh, who was then just mounted at the porch, and perceived the waving of the earl's plume above the heads of his followers, till they had all attained the level ground.

Mondomer proceeded in the exactly opposite direction, and during the day made sundry observations to his companion with his accustomed good humour, but thought that the other was peculiarly taciturn and shy. This Hugh naturally attributed to uneasy reflections upon his having suffered the prisoner to escape the evening before, mixed probably with a sense of mortification at having been behind hand, (although accidentally) and prevented from assisting his master in the skirmish. He therefore exerted himself to restore poor Ned's ease of mind; and, by talking, from time to time, with more freedom and gaiety than he otherwise would have been inclined to do, he in some measure succeeded.

"How did you fare," Hugh asked him,

at the Crown there, the place where we passed the night?—Could you get any thing at all to eat?"

"I got just what the rest o'em got, your honour: there was biscakes, I think, and rye-bread and bacon; but as for the beer, why, e'en for the like o' us, 'twas but oddish kind o' stuff: 'twas as black as the kitchen boiler."

"Not much sleep, hey?" said Hugh, who was not without curiosity to hear the servants' version of their master's story.

"Sleep, sir! not much of that, Sir Hugh. There was two on'em was ask'd to sing double songs with outlandish words, what they learn't when they was abroad with my lord: and they told one a great deal about abroad, and said they lik'd it. They lik'd it, that is, as for the fine weather, and them vineyards as lies along by the road side, but not for doing the meat all to rags."

"And told stories, I suppose?" said Mondomer.

"Oh, many's the story, sir."

" A good subject for them," observed Hugh, " that strange man they were in chase of."

" Oh, aye! and such a sight as they told me on, your honour, Sir Hugh! you see, when they was got among the Swish, down comes from the mountains, ice, and snow, and rocks, and every thing in the universe, all together, and so crashed, and roared, and carried all away with it."——

" But I should have thought," said Hugh, " they would have been more inclined to talk of wonders that they were then most certainly in the midst of. You don't mean to say that they never mentioned the object of our pursuit in the copse?"

" To be sure, your honour, they did—mentioned!—I believe they did, indeed. That long fellow in particular with a cast in his eye, and a hare-lip; 'till a got drowsy, and that was a fair warning to me not to steal a nap. For while he was fast on the settle there under the chimney, the rest on'em takes a long feather, and smears it with soot, and such a phiz, Sir Hugh, as they gie'un."

"Listen to me, Ned, for a moment," said Hugh; "do you remember what you told me as we were coming up from Belton, about a certain strange unaccountable figure — Why! what's the matter with the man? Do you hear me? — keep up. Did not you tell me that the servants suspected some ill of him, or intimate as much?"

"I intimate! your worship, Sir Hugh; not I truly; Laud ha' mercy upon us! never saw him in my life before or since. I know no harm of him."

"What was it you told me about his departure, and the stable, or something?"

"Oh! 'twas all along o' that silly fellow, Tom Uggens; I ha' heard all about that business since, from one of the Belton lads as has been up in Lunnun. Tom made a piece o' work about it, but he left the keys out himself — a booby — hanging up by the kitchen door, so the gentleman made use o'em to saddle his horse, for the key of the stable was among 'em. That's the whole, Sir Hugh; and for all what others may gossip, and chatter, and that,

I shan't say no ill o' a gentleman when I don't know none. Many and many's the boy 's got into mischief by not bridling his tongue your honour."

"What do you keep twisting your head about for?" said his master.

"Indeed, sir," returned Ned, "there's such strange things comes to pass, that one can't be too much on the look out: no, not even your own-self, Sir Hugh, and you're a bold young gentleman. I'm sure, as for me, I'd tell your worship every thing I knew, let me get at it how I might, aye, that would I; but as for the person you was asking about, I don't know nothing in the world about 'un, and therefore I can't tell, you see, Sir Hugh."

Mondomer said no more, being perfectly convinced that the anecdotes of Lord Essex's domestics had infected poor Ned with horrors which would be likely for a good while to render his days anxious and uneasy, and his nights, in all probability, so painful, that, in common humanity, Hugh thought it behoved him to drop the subject. They afterwards

travelled through almost incessant rain for the greater part of their remaining journey; and upon approaching the north-western border of Northumberland, found the waters so much swollen near the confluence of the river Rhead with the Upper Tyne, that a considerable portion of a long, low, straggling wooden bridge had been absolutely carried away. And as they were informed that nothing could be met with in the shape of a boat, unless they descended the stream for between six and seven miles, as far as Ollerton Mill, they were reduced to swim their horses over.

In this operation, Ned, either from a want of due attention, or his horse being overpowered and borne down by the rapid flow of the current in a sudden small channel, was at one moment in no little danger. They landed, however, at length in safety upon the northern bank.

" Did your honor ever see they towers before?" cried Ned, pointing with his left hand, while the right was engaged in freeing a part of his own attire from sundry weeds that had adhered

to it in the water. Hugh smiled and nodded; for a lofty, rugged, and frowning hill, which had been visible to the travellers more or less for upwards of an hour, now assumed a distinct shape; and from a mass of wood that rose, but with far less abruptness, opposite to it, first one, and soon after several towers became quite clear to the eye. Mondomer Castle was built upon a considerable elevation, but that situation was the less remarkable, from the gradual ascent in the approach to it, and from two hills of no mean size, and rich with luxuriant foliage to their very summits, which arose close upon the mansion, one immediately behind it, and the other somewhat farther to the westward.

The domain consisted of a noble and well stocked park, an extensive part of which was commanded in view from the front apartments, and the prospect terminated in that direction by the bare and craggy mountain mentioned before. On all the other sides the castle was surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, the chain taking its commencement

from the two that were nearest to the dwelling. This range was abundant in every species of wood, sometimes thicket and copse alone, sometimes lofty trees united by the thicket at bottom; then it sunk at once into a deep glen, through the bottom of which a torrent from the hills was heard to fret, for, from the top of the rocks that overhung its bed, the stream could never be seen. Paths and roads of various sizes had been cut, with vast labour, through the tangled woods, and for miles and miles one might wander upon the turf with nothing to interrupt the soothing reflexions natural to such scenes, but the apprehension of being utterly lost and bewildered in "these close dungeons of innumerous boughs;" an inconvenience (if it could be called one,) that perpetually occurred, even to those best acquainted with the domain.

Many of the beauties around might be descried from the site of the castle, but by no means all; for, on ascending through the shaded paths in its immediate vicinity, on a sudden (whether from contrivance, or a happy

natural effect, we are not absolutely clear) a chasm appeared for ten or twenty yards amongst the trees, on the very brow of a hill, which opened an exquisite prospect over groves, lawns, the scattered village of Black-burnham, and the wild district called Gem-blespeth Moor.

At the foot of the mountain immediately opposite to Mondomer Castle might now be discovered, for the first time, the entire surface of a fair and glassy lake, several miles in circumference: and beyond that, the irregular summits of the Cheviots, now round, now pointed, now broken and heaped together in grandeur and confusion.

Upon the arrival of Sir Hugh Mondomer within the park gates, Ned discharged the fire-arms with which he had been provided, with an air of as much consequence as if he had always been at hand whenever they were most wanted. The village children instantly flocked around from various quarters of the park, where they had been employed, some in clambering trees for nests, some in shooting at

rooks with a cross bow, some in gathering wood, others in breaking fences, but almost all in what they ought not to have been about. Hugh, however, gave them a most affectionate reception, shook hands with the biggest, patted the little ones on the head, and was excessively pleased with himself on finding that he recollected so many of them, and had the right thing to say as to their fathers, mothers, uncles, business, and so forth. Upon his passing under a fine spreading oak within fifteen yards of the mansion, a large bell, suspended among its branches, sounded forth with much noise and perseverance, and the old porter who had occasioned it, from his dwelling beneath the tree in an uncouth sort of lodge, between a cot and a hermitage, (but made exceedingly comfortable within) stepped forward to give his welcome to his young master, and future lord of the whole noble territory.

Hugh was now in one of the courts of the castle, and received there with a manner compounded of intimacy, respect, and tenderness,

by the minister of the parish, Master Jonathan Simcox, and his prim, notable dame. This worthy man had, during Hugh's childhood, officiated as curate at Belton, where he acquired (no very difficult acquisition) in such a degree the regard and good will of Sir Giles Harlande, that, at the knight's recommendation, he had been some years before this time preferred to the vicarage of Blackburnham, within which parish was situated the main residence of our hero's ancient family.

"Blessings on thee a thousand and a thousand times!" said Simcox, wringing Mondomer's hand between both his own; "why, thou'rt grown to be sure, and just the same honest, good-humoured countenance as when" —"My dear," whispered the dame, with a pretty violent nudge, "my dear Jonathan, consider, Sir Hugh Mondomer is not now a lad of fifteen."

"Don't tell me," retorted her husband: "here, Sir Hugh! here's my dame will have it that you're grown an old courtier, and

nothing will do but I must bow like a bulrush."

Hugh laughed, and said something to dispel the fidget and uneasiness of the lady at her husband's forwardness towards his patron's heir, then added—"It was very kind of you, my old friends, to come down to the castle; but now you are here, depend upon it I shall man the battlements, have up the drawbridge, and detain you close prisoners: what should I do alone here in this city of a place?"

"We took upon ourselves the freedom, Sir Hugh," said the female moderator of the parish, "to step over from the vicarage and see that all was right, and the linen aired; and Fenton, the bailiff, who was left in charge of the castle, would fain have made us take our dinner here; but we knew our duty better by the family, than to sit down before your honour's arrival."

"And have you really, madam," answered Hugh, "have you actually waited till this hour in the afternoon, on my account?—Oh!

dear! dear! it was excessively wrong, and I declare I am not sure but that you have taken away my appetite entirely by such formality."

"Not quite that, I hope," said the parson: "however, my mistress, I suppose, will permit us to fall to now you are arrived. All's ready in the little north parlour, call it dinner, or supper, or what you will."

"But, my good friends," said Mondomer, "I have had a river to swim, and must just beg ten minutes of you to change my clothes."

"Heaven help us!" cried the dame, "would I had known that before!—Stop, Sir Hugh, stop,—I'll send to the vicarage for some well-aired things of my husband's; or stay—I'll go myself.—No, Jonathan,—nonsense, I tell you, you won't know where to find 'em."

Hugh, however, not only interposed with his veto, but gave positive orders that no one should be permitted to leave the castle: and, before the wrangling between Fenton and the lady upon that head had any thing like

ceased, our hero, fresh, dry, and comfortable, made his re-appearance.

" I'd wager all I'm worth in the world," said the vicar, " that I know how you came by that ducking, my young master: was it not at Twyford-bridge — tell me that?"

" It was where Twyford-bridge ought to have been," replied Hugh.

" What! it's been carried away again by the waters, I warrant you," quoth the lady. " Now I'll tell you a wonderful thing about that bridge. The least flood now damages it so, that nobody can pass, and yet in the winter before the late queen's death, when the whole country was under water — Ah! but Sir Hugh, my poor silly stories will not divert you now, as they did when you were a boy."

" Just as much, believe me, my dear dame."

" Oh, quite as much as ever," interrupted Simcox; " full certain am I that our good young friend will listen to your tales, Rebecca, with the same pleasure as formerly. But you must take the right time, after supper, while

you live. Sir Hugh always liked 'em best after supper."

This said, the three friends repaired to their meal, with reasonable cheerfulness, and excellent appetites.

CHAPTER XIII.

We now consider it a duty that can no longer be neglected, to inquire after the good family at Belton, where, about the middle of August, some visitors were expected to make a stay at the hall; and as Sir Giles Harlande was extremely methodical, having married late, and been confirmed in sundry bachelor habits before he entered upon a state of happy and honourable wedlock, the visits he received, as well as those he paid, generally took place at a regular stated period of the year.

All the domestics had now been duly lectured in their several departments; the angling apparatus, including every description of implement for river-fishing, was as perfect as it could be made; otter-hounds were sent for, but had not yet arrived; every species of hawk, from the gyr-falcon to the hobby, was exercised, examined, and its training discussed. The relative merits of the Scandinavian,

Scottish, and English falcon, were expatiated upon with profound learning and deep discrimination; and however little the young ladies understood the meaning of them, full well were they accustomed to the sound of the terms, Bewits, Jesses, Hood and Rufter-Hood, Seeling, Imping, Tiring — "And found no end in uncouth jargon lost."

Not but that the female part of the family were ever ready to attend and admire the feats of these birds, when sufficiently perfect for exhibition, which, it may be supposed, gave them much the same degree of pleasure that a quadrille party would do if they were now in existence, or rather, that certain county races might be expected to give, where the sport itself is nothing, but the company it brings together, with giggling, flirtation, attentions, &c. a very great deal. Elinor, indeed, always held, though we never heard of any body else being of the same opinion, that she herself was thoroughly conversant in these mysteries, and an excellent falconer.

Sir Giles had been to examine a ledger-bait

for pike, which he at first disapproved of; nor was it till after he had suggested several skilful alterations, and evinced prodigious knowledge upon the subject, to the admiration of the by-standers, that he agreed to let it be used as he found it. On his return to the house, Margaret and Elinor came running forth to inform him, that the Hughsons were prevented from coming; but to make amends for that, young Geoffrey Stanley had just arrived at his cousin, the baronet's, who proposed bringing him with them.

"Aye, by all means!" said Sir Giles: "let's see; there were the two old folks, William Hughson, and that great lubber, Tom: four fail us at once. Well, then, the Stanley party, how many be they?"

"Three now, you know," said Margaret.

"I declare, father," cried the youngest, "I am not sure that Alice Stanley's coming gives me any pleasure. Not but she's brisk and amusing enough when she chooses; but she gives herself airs over us, as if she had seen so much more of the world."

"And art thee silly lass enough to be jealous o' that, Elinor? Now, supposing she's been ever so much more about, as she certainly has, why, let her talk of it, it's o' no other use to her mayhap."

"Nay, I never said it was," returned Elinor: "but, father, there's nothing, is there, in that foolish story about the Mondomer people meaning her for Hugh? I'm certain they had little or no acquaintance two month's ago."

"As to a set o' folks meaning a girl like Alice Stanley, whose own estate is near as large as her brother's, for this man and that man, it seems, to my judgment, a queer way o' talking. But, for the Mondomers to wish it, when her land is intermixed and that, with theirs, is likely enough: and you heard, as well as I did, what Master Vavasore says about it. Howsomever, there's no wisdom, as I know on, in thinking more o' Hugh Mondomer than he does of us. He was an honest youth: I couldn't well mistake that: but being dependent, and one thing and t'other, upon my lord,

his uncle; that woman too, as twists us all how she pleases, and her friends, getting about the lad ——. But I don't understand it, nor shan't vex myself; and I ha' got so many things to do, that I don't well know how to set 'em a-going. What! my rose-bud! my darling!" cried he, extending his hand to Blanche, who now came from the house to join them; bear up! my own good girl: hast got thy lively looks again, I declare. Now then, show 'em all, that as thou'rt the joy and delight of thy old father, he also can make thy life a tolerable happy one."

"That he can, and that he does, and that he always will," said Blanche, tenderly embracing him. "But, my dear father, I came to tell you that Lord Alfreton is absolutely here, with his brother, the officer; and there was nobody ready to take their horses, so one of their own servants holds them till ——."

"Odso! already! Come in, girls: come in," exclaimed the knight; and two or three minutes having been most effectively consumed in shouting, storming at, and giving directions

to the servants, the latter spread themselves in every conceivable direction: some, in accommodation of the guests themselves; some, of their attendants; and others, of their quadrupeds, of the larger and smaller order. Sir Giles and the young ladies attended the two youths in the saloon, with a cordial and natural address; unaffectedly civil on the part of the daughters—somewhat rough, perhaps, but friendly and hearty on that of the knight.

Of Edward, the second brother, we had occasion to make some mention in a former part of this history. But Lord Alfreton, the eldest hope of his family, was a different sort of young man; having been indulged from his childhood, he had become habitually apt to give way to the feeling of the moment; and in particular to a shyness, mixed, as it very commonly is, with a certain portion of pride, which had so far grown upon him, that he disliked the pageantry of the metropolis, where, notwithstanding his great situation and prospects, considerable restraint was frequently necessary, and where many must always have

been of superior consequence to himself. Nor would he accompany his father and mother on a continental expedition during this summer; but preferred a kind of secluded life at one of the earl's inferior seats, not far from Penrith. There he filled up his time, if not altogether satisfactorily, still, according to his own pleasure; as he really enjoyed, not country diversions peculiarly, but every thing, generally speaking, that belongs to the country. Now, whether it was that the honest frank manners of Sir Giles put him at his ease, and pleased him; or that he felt a latent, undefined, indolent sort of wish to recommend himself to some one of the young ladies of the house; or from both these causes together: but assuredly, of all his neighbours, he was by far most partial to the family at Belton. His lordship would have borne it with great resignation, if that gay, and usually acceptable gentleman, the Honourable Edward Alfreton, had not favoured him with a visit at this juncture. But the captain, who had been kept by military business from the foreign excursion, hap-

pened to have a given portion of slaughterable time just then upon his hands, which, without any particular desire of engrossing his brother's society, he did not know how to dispose of elsewhere.

They had now been sitting some time together in the tapestry apartment, and the common inquiries and observations which, upon a new arrival, are poured forth as a thing of course, without being much heeded by those who make them, or those to whom they are addressed, were drawing to a termination.

"Well, Master Edward," said Sir Giles, "and how's the chesnut mare?"

"Upon my life, Sir Giles, I know you'll laugh at me about her; but I give you my word as a gentleman, I wouldn't take double the money for her now that you very well know I was offered last year: no need to mention particulars. But there was Vaux; and the best of it is, that fellow thought he could put me out of conceit by running her down, and young Stanley too just the same. I say,

Sir Giles, Geoffrey Stanley! by way of a man with an eye to a horse! how d'ye like that?"

"Come, come, Master Alfreton, jockeyship's a ticklish matter, as one may say: have all thy laugh out at Geoffrey, if you be disposed to laugh at 'un, before Sir George comes."

"What! do you expect that set of Stanleys?"

"By my troth do we; and Geoffrey's down wi' 'em for the present."

"I'm glad to hear it, with all my heart; he's a fair fellow, Geoffrey, and not at all the worse for knowing nothing of the points of a horse. Those two alone, I suppose?"

"Then there's nobody else in the family, hey?" said Sir Giles. "Ah, Edward! that's just the way I used to beat about when I was a lad. Did'st ever hear that Sir George had a sister?"

"Beat about! I like you for that, Sir Giles. It makes very little difference to me, whether Mistress Alice is of the party or not: however, of the two—she's a lively, fine

girl, and perhaps one would as soon meet her."

In the meantime, Lord Alfreton, who liked all the Belton girls, and admired Blanche more than he admitted to himself, had drawn off with them, and formed a sort of knot in the oriel, where he conversed with great satisfaction to himself, and of course, as he was by no means a dull young man, with considerable ease and spirit.

They all became mighty good friends, and ran with much liveliness and volubility through the topics, of their acquaintance in the county, the various points of ridicule, pretensions, and merits of each, and the convenience of an entire cessation of hostilities with their northern neighbours, upon whose immediate border Belton was situated, if not even on debateable ground. Blanche said least, but seemed attentive, and was, as usual, extremely amiable and engaging. We are not at all sure that a certain degree of reserve did not add to the interest with which she had already inspired this young nobleman. The impression was stronger

than he imagined; and the difference between her manner towards him, and the ease of her sisters, not being marked enough to alarm his vanity, in fact soothed it, and led him into the commonest of all mistakes; into a notion, that is to say, that she partook of his feelings, and was endeavouring to act with propriety under their influence. Now the consideration was, what they were all to do between that time and the hour of dinner.

After divers plans of agreeable occupation had been successively got rid of by Lord Alfreton with much address, (for his difficulty was enhanced by the necessity of so stating all his objections to what was proposed, as if he had other people's accommodation solely in view,) it was settled, at length, according to his lordship's wishes, that Sir Giles and Edward, the latter being rather a favourite with the old gentleman, should ride and see all that Saunders had done since the enclosure at the upper end of broad Hollybourne waste, while the eldest brother and the girls were to take their way in the direction of a border-fortress, in itself not

very remarkable, but which stood in a striking situation. It was as yet tenanted by an officer, deputed by the house of Norfolk, who, since the union of the crowns, had lived there with his reduced garrison in almost undisturbed tranquillity. The young party proceeded with great glee, talking generally three, but never less than two together, and were well disposed to be pleased with every thing. The site of this tower was observed upon, and admired; but as, whatever may be the case now, there was at that time no particular inducement for exploring the inside of the hold, they passed on round Lannercost Abbey, and entered one of the walks between gigantic oaks, which had belonged to that establishment. The place was still kept in some sort of order by a Roman Catholic family of property in the neighbourhood, whose ancient influence was not entirely extinct, even among such of the peasantry as had conformed to the established church.

"This then is the place," observed Lord Alfreton, "of which we heard so much in the

year 1607: I have long had an inclination to see it."

"Oh, those reports reached your lordship's part of the county then: they have not totally ceased since," said Margaret. "I was a ready listener," replied he; "for legends of that sort always gave me pleasure; and the more remote the district where they originated, the more interest they had, in my idea. Not that I was gratified with any very distinct accounts; mine was merely an impression taken from the fears and mysterious hints of the common people."

"You heard then pretty nearly as much as we did," said the young lady, "for we never could get more than grave looks, shaking of the head, and half sentences, from our own church-folk; and crossings of themselves, with perhaps some more definite expressions of horror, from the papists."

"Dear me, Margaret," cried the youngest, "how can you tell Lord Alfreton that nothing further was heard by any of us, when you know as well as I do that it was attempted to

perform our church-service there, and it never could be done: no, not by the steadiest, best, and wisest of our ministers."

"What prevented it, pray?" said his lordship.

"Well, now I wonder you should ask such a question," returned Elinor, pushing in her horse between Lord Alfreton and her sister; and then adding, in a lower tone, "some more than human power, to be sure, which always interfered to hinder it."

"Indeed!" observed Lord Alfreton: "what say you to that, Mistress Margaret?"

"Why, I say, that Elinor's a little goose, and has a pleasure in being imposed upon."

"I am very certain she has," said Blanche, cutting the youngest short in what would have been a most animated defence of herself: "the truth, however, is, as far as we could reach it, that such frequent interruptions have occurred to the establishment of the abbey, for the regular worship of the country around, either by the contrivance of the Roman Catholics, (and there are many more here-

about of the old religion than acknowledge it,) or by some other management that has never yet been discovered, as have completely terrified the lower orders, and perhaps not those alone."

"But the bishop talks, does he not," said Alfreton, "of renewing the experiment?"

"His lordship has done so for these several years," replied the eldest, smiling; "and, I hear, is ever most positive when most doubt is expressed about his intentions. That odd, forward man, Sir John Clytherwytt, offered to stake a large sum, that the bishop either did not reopen the abbey for protestant duty at all; or, if he did, that no minister could be got to officiate. But he had his answer, I trow."

"It was very severe, they say," observed Margaret; "though nobody knows exactly what it was."

"I do," said Elinor: "my lord bishop raised his voice, and he said, just grand, and as if he had been in the pulpit, you know, 'Sir John Clytherwytt, hearken to me. If you have so much wealth that it cannot be

dissipated without foolish and unbecoming wagers; and if you have so much time ——' No, no—so little; aye, that was it: 'so little value for time, that—that—that'—something about improper levity as to grave subjects ——. Why he, the bishop, you see, would advise him to take care; for as to that, his own principles were by no means without suspicion; that is, Sir John's principles—"

A burst of laughter from the whole party here interrupted this biting reproof of the prelate's.

"Oh! nonsense!" cried Elinor: "you won't give one time."

"Are those buildings to the left of the church of any use at present?" Lord Alfreton asked.

"The first is of none whatever," replied Blanche; the other is of some service, I suppose, to the miller, as he pays a small rent for it: they were both barns formerly. But the third:—this way, my lord; a little more round: you can't see it there for the trees. Now you have it: that was part of the left

wing of the monastery, and might be made a comfortable habitation, if you could get over the awkward stories attached to the spot."

"But it *is* inhabited at this moment, I'll swear," cried Alfreton: "I saw some one at the turret loop-hole."

"It is so," said Blanche, "by a friend of my father's."

"Oh, yes," cried Elinor, "my father took me to see him; and such a strange history—such adventures as he has gone through: but he never comes to the hall, or any where else. I like any thing so wild and odd; it gives one something out of the common way to think of."

"What may his name be, Mistress Elinor? However, I beg pardon," said his lordship, perceiving Margaret frowning at her sister, to keep her quiet.

"Nay, I am persuaded," said Blanche, aware that already things had gone too far to be smothered in that manner; "I am certain that my father could have no objection to our informing Lord Alfreton of what he has thought proper to tell us concerning the gen-

tleman who at present resides here. But I must premise to your lordship that he has reasons for living in close retirement—not to say concealment."

"I shall be grateful for what you please to communicate," returned Lord Alfreton; "and I hope, as discreet as you could wish."

"All that we know, is soon told. Some days ago my father was called out while we were at dinner, by this person, as he said afterwards. His name is Vavasore: he is one of a well-known northern family; a Roman Catholic house. And though this member of it was never before personally known to my father, there was a time when he lived in great intimacy and friendship with many of his relations: his brother, in particular, I understand. Since Guido Fawkes's conspiracy, none of the family have been much in England: not that there ever was the least reason for implicating any individual of that honourable race in so horrid a transaction; but I fancy they expected the times to be hard upon all their persuasion."

" Surely," said Alfreton, " this gentleman might now, with common prudence and caution on his part, live undisturbed in any part of the island."

" I am told not, my lord," she replied.

" Why, to say the truth, observed Margaret, hesitatingly, " this person was may be in a sort of way concerned ——"

" How, madam! can it be possible that your father would protect one of the most unprovoked and diabolical traitors?"

" No, no," interrupted the eldest, " he most certainly was not himself concerned in the plot, but we do understand him to be in some danger, though 'tis doubtful whether the whole is not over by this time, for having favoured the escape of Tesmond, the jesuit, out of the country, by whom his own life had been saved in Spain several years before."

" That is, indeed, a very different case," said Lord Alfreton, with the warmth of youthful feeling, " and might have been rather excusable, indeed commendable, than otherwise. So Sir Giles, I imagine, accommodated

him with his present dwelling, and befriends him. Does he like his situation?"

"I have scarcely seen him yet: but one of my sisters has."

"I met him once as I was riding with my father," said the second.

"And I," cried Elinor, "have been at the house there: he has but one eye, and is terribly scarred, and has been in the wars in Flanders, and France, and Portugal: and where has he not? And he knows every body, and every thing. And yet I'm positive he can't like to live where he does: it must damp the heart of the bravest soldier in Europe to pass his nights all solitary there, by the Abbey."

"My dear little girl," said Margaret, "how can you form a judgment of such matters? There is a spirit and ferocity about some men, of which we have no idea; a ferocity, which makes 'em disregard all that can be called formidable, or thought of that's appalling."

"Not ghosts and spectres," replied Elinor; they are just as much afraid of them as we women."

" There is indeed," the other continued, in a somewhat fretful tone: " there is, I assure you. It may not be called courage; perhaps 'tis rather insensibility: but their minds are scared to all impression of fear: they can set every thing at total defiance."

" Not apparitions, I am confident," said Elinor. This sentence, though, was suddenly cut short by the extreme troublesomeness of her horse, which, annoyed by flies, had run in among the thick foliage, and being frightened by the rustling of the boughs, became so unruly as to demand the whole attention of their conductor, and put her sisters to some pain for her. Out of this trial, however, the fair Elinor came with victory and glory. She kept her seat, and, very fairly, her composure, through the process of snorting, throwing back the ears, and striving to run away with her, kicking and rearing, till both were in imminent danger of falling backwards. At length all was peace and harmony again; and with renewed spirits from her triumph, and the consequent compliments of the young

nobleman accompanying them, Elinor twice, upon their return to dinner, threw down the gauntlet to her sister Margaret, on the subject of the lords of the creation being equally discomposed at ghosts with their helpmates. But the latter either disdained, or for other reasons was indisposed to the controversy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE dinner, without much pretensions to elegance, but plentiful and excellent of its kind, was entirely concluded by half-past two in the afternoon; and, after two toasts given, one to his majesty's long life and preservation, the other to the lasting ascendency of the reformed faith, the females withdrew.

The refined practice among men of filling slightly and carelessly for the first half-hour, then increasing their cups in proportion to the failure of their understandings, manifested by the fearlessness, heat, impropriety, and absurdity of their discourse, and at length setting in (at whatever hour they might happen to dine) for determined soaking through the whole evening; this laudable custom, old English, as it is apt to be called, had not however been thoroughly introduced at the period we speak of; nor indeed was it an indispensable and inevitable operation to be nightly performed at

every squire's house in the country, till-past the middle of that century, when the puritanical tide had turned.

Nothing in the least approaching to excess took place at Belton this day: so far from it, the whole party was collected soon after four by the river side, for the sport of huxing the pike. Now was deep science shown by Sir Giles and Edward Alfreton, in remarks ostensibly made to each other, or the young ladies, but in reality directed at the under falconer, a remarkably clever fisherman, who was in attendance with four or five bare-footed dredging boys, in case that sort of assistance should be deemed necessary, not to mention a promiscuous crowd of villagers of all ages, from nine years old to three score and ten.

The applause and acquiescence in their shrewd remarks, conveyed with all humility and awe by that branch of the spectators, gave a sensible delight to the old knight and Edward, the only two of the higher observers who could be decisively pronounced as among the initiated in this diversion.

" Slowly down, Hanway—slowly down," cried Sir Giles.—" Can't thee keep thy paws off," to a villager boy who had officiously approached the apparatus, but ran back upon this rebuke as if he had touched an adder: " that's it, don't let 'em tangle; now then, set 'em a-float." And no less than forty-two large bladders closely fastened together, each bladder furnished with the proper line, bait, and hook, were committed to the stream, which they slowly dropped down.

The sport (which turned out particularly good) consisted in the furious and desperate struggles of the fresh-water tyrant after he had seized the bait, or struck himself accidentally, and the extreme discomposure of the poor animal while beating about among the bladders, till he submitted in utter exhaustion to his fate.

Margaret and Elinor, dabbling among the wet weeds, clapping their hands, and every thing but absolutely in the water themselves, were in transports at the fluctuations of this amusement; while the gentle Blanche, who

always endeavoured to like what she was told she must like, and did indeed exert herself to promote every thing that gave her father pleasure, uttered now and then an observation sufficient to prove her interest in what was going forward, after which she sauntered along the bank of the stream, and made efforts to reason herself into feeling as happy and cheerful as the rest. Lord Alfreton, meantime, whose indolence acted against his becoming an adept in any of these sports, and whose restlessness of mind soon wearied him in the pursuit of them, eager and violent as that pursuit generally was at the beginning, now grew cooler in his exclamations of applause, and less attentive to the whole proceeding. He took this opportunity of entering into conversation with Blanche; and she, feeling grateful for the attention, however little she desired it just at that moment, exerted herself to please him, in which (as she had often done before) she perfectly succeeded. There was something resistless, to this visionary young man, in the sense and native elegance

of her ideas, the propriety of her language, and, above all, in the sweetness and bewitching spirit of her smiles. She was, in truth, a delightful girl, and might have turned the head of any youth, without extraordinary weakness on his part.

Lord Alfreton was more deeply smitten than ever. He had not yet thought seriously (as the determination to make an offer is properly enough called) upon the matter; it merely occurred to him, that the Belton visit was really a mighty pleasant affair, and the only thing from which he had expected any gratification that had not disappointed him, for he couldn't well say how long.

It now grew late, the tackle was drawn up upon the bank, the spoils were duly secured and carried off with exultation, and all returned in great force to the hall, at least as far as universal and simultaneous chattering and laughing could be admitted for a proof of it.

"Accident! pshaw! no—don't put such stuff into the girl's heads," said Sir Giles,

while they were all sitting together in the saloon—" one's heard, indeed, Master Edward, of robbers near about Lon'non, on the great Kent road, may be, where your sparks are going to an fro, for outlandish parts; but, bless your heart! in our quiet corner o' the world, and since all's still upon the border—oh, no,—no such thing. I knew well enough they'd be late, Sir George Stanley said as much."

" But they may have met with some mischance, father," said Blanche; " and you see 'tis totally dark; shouldn't a few of our men be sent out with torches?"

" Sent out wi' fiddlesticks!" quoth the knight. " Pooh, 'tis darkish, mayhap, within doors, but they'll ha' twylight good out on't for this half hour yet. Stay, here they be."

" Bless and deliver us!—what's all that noise," cried Elinor. Sir Giles started up in manifest alarm. " Compose yourself, my dear father," said Blanche, " do not think of going out alone."

" The house is beset, Edward!" cried Lord

Alfreton to his brother: " by Heaven it is attacked! There again, do you hear? You've your sword on, are there any fire-arms? We'll stand by them to the last."

The young men drew their swords, and Sir Giles seized a quarter-staff with a long iron spike at the end of it, an instrument that had done service of yore in many a northern inroad, and which, apparently, was never more needed than at the present juncture: for the most overpowering and appalling noise assailed their ears, of shrieks, supplications, threats, storming, chiding, blows, and, overruling the whole, (like a good set of treble voices in a complete choir) the full cry, it should seem, of all the hounds in the county, mixed, indeed, with the yelping and howling of many among them, as if in violent pain.

Forth sallied our three cavaliers, with their minds made up to the crisis. But even when they reached the scene of disturbance, it was no very short time before they could discover what had happened. By degrees, however, to the unspeakable relief of the girls, and by

no means the discomfort of their gallant defenders, it appeared, in the first place, that the otter-hounds had just arrived from the neighbourhood of Carlisle. Secondly, that when they were approaching the kennel in as admirable order and discipline as ever dogs exhibited, they passed by a small square court, the door of which had been incautiously left open, and in this court resided, in tubs laid along upon the ground, to which they were fastened with a very liberal length of chain, two tame foxes.

The effluvia of these beasts unhappily reached the hungry hounds upon their march, and, in a thought, the junior of the two was torn to pieces, and the other would undoubtedly have fallen by the same base aggression of numbers, had not Tom, the groom, at the very considerable hazard of his own person, hastily interposed with a flail, the first weapon he could lay his hand upon, and it is lucky he found that. He, bestriding the mouth of the barrel, into the heart of which poor Reynard

had retired, made a noble and vigorous defence, but which could not be effected without great damage to the assailants.

Meanwhile the whippers-in who attended the dogs, perceiving, and justly irritated at, their deviation from the prescribed route, took the invading enemy in flank with the instruments of their vocation, while a great part (indeed we have reason to think the whole) of the female servants, had by this time joined the dire yell, conceiving, with more or less definite notions upon the subject, that not only both the foxes had perished, but most of the hounds, and one, at least, of the men.

As usual, after a fray attended with mighty clamour, the mischief, when all tumult was suppressed, proved less enormous than had been apprehended; and, in the midst of lamentations over the dead cub, panegyrics upon Tom Uggins, and directions as to the maimed hounds, Sir Giles's attention was called off by the approach of horses, and this observation from one of their riders:—

"What the devil's going on here?—hunting at this time o'night? How fare ye, my old friend—'tis surely you I see?"

"How dost do, how dost do, Sir George?" answered the knight, with a tremendously hearty laugh; "welcome to Belton. And the fair Mistress Alice, too, I vow: let me help thee to alight, my pearl of pearls! And who have we here?—odso, Master Geoffrey, I'd forgot him; glad to see Geoffrey too; gie 's thy fist, lad."

"But, really and truly, what is all this?" said Alice Stanley, upon regaining her feet. "I do assure you, Sir Giles, that for upwards of two miles together we have heard such an uproar from the hall here, as if a fox had been run into your kitchen and killed there by all the dogs to the north of the Trent."

Before Sir Giles could answer, the two youngest girls had laid violent hands upon the female guest, and, as they drew her within the mansion, Margaret in some measure gave the requisite information, in which Elinor was utterly incapable of assisting, from reiterated peals and shrieks of laughter that it was im-

possible for her to repress, so at least she declared, till the train of thought she was indulging brought her to an unpleasant reflexion.

" I am in reality, tho'," said she, " very much vexed at the loss of the cub-fox, for 'twas yours, Margaret—not that it could ever have been brought into the house."

They were all soon re-assembled in the saloon, and, notwithstanding the derangement among the domestics produced by all this confusion, and the necessity that each felt for communicating to some other how he or she had at first been struck by it, what they had apprehended, and how they had exerted themselves in the sequel; supper was announced to be ready in the great hall, not twenty minutes after the usual time, and the knight giving his arm to Alice Stanley, (a fashion that, by the way, has come round again after a lapse of two centuries) Lord Alfreton escorting Blanche, and his brother and young Stanley the two remaining sisters, a social, abundant, and most lively repast took place.

The alarm that Stanley's late arrival had occasioned, was afterwards touched upon, which brought on a desultory flirtation between the young lady and Edward Alfreton. She insisted upon it, that nine out of ten of the disturbances heard of occasionally upon the highway, proceeded from the frolics of young gentlemen—young officers especially: and he protesting that if he had known of her crossing Bew-Castle flats at that hour, he would certainly have headed a party to carry her off.

" Very good, very fair," said Sir Giles, delighted with his company, and exhilarated by his after-supper draught, made that evening exactly to his mind. " Now let's have a song, or a story, or somewhat o' that."

" Some ghost stories," said Elinor.

" Alice desires no better sport," observed Geoffrey; " she has a stock that would keep you all without sleep for a fortnight."

" Never mind his nonsense, Sir Giles," replied Alice; " you understand him."

" Aye, aye, but this 'ull never do wi' me,

who ha' heard thee so often before, my bonny damsel," said the old knight.

"Oh, we're resolved, it must be," quoth one.

"You shan't stir 'till you have," cried a second.

"Pinch her, Mistress Elinor; torture her till she does," cried a third.

"Well, well," said Alice with a sigh, "have your own wills—what can one forlorn being do against so many?

"You must understand, gentlemen and ladies, that the late king of France was a brave soldier and a merry man."—

"That was he," exclaimed Sir Giles; "to his glorious memory drink all round, I insist upon it."

"And nothing," continued she, "gave him more delight than freely mixing with his subjects, and finding out their characters, and habits, and affections, and so on.—So what does he, but in company with his favourite minister and friend, Rosni, he must needs wander about the city of Paris by night, and

seek adventures in disguise. Well, one evening they passed themselves off for merchants of Cherbourg, and picked up an acquaintance with one Du Bac, a humourist in his way, and who lived well, but nobody knew how. So they made themselves pleasant, and soon got friends, and Du Bac asked 'em to his hotel, and gave 'em an exceeding good supper. His conversation charmed them as much as his meat and wine, and he told such stories as made their very bones ache with laughing."

"Excellent! my good sir—incomparable," cried Rosni: "but what surprises me is, that we should never (for we're often called to Paris,) have heard of you before: what's your business? and how do you contrive to give these delightful entertainments?"

"Of all the vices that belong to our race," said Du Bac, coolly, "I hate curiosity the worst," and with that gave the minister a smart slap o' the face, and immediately afterwards continued to talk with the same liveliness and ease as before. The marquess started up trembling with passion; but his

master held him, and whispering—" 'Tis fair indeed, you brought it on yourself; don't be a fool and expose us both; I promise you your revenge," and so forth—with difficulty persuaded him to be seated again. At parting, the king invited M. Du Bac to return the visit on the following night, and sup with them at their lodging. A suitable place was therefore provided, and, in a like disguise, Henry and his minister received their new acquaintance, the plan being, of course, to entrap him into the same impertinence that he had himself objected to, and to visit him with the same punishment. The first course, with that view, was above every thing brilliant, sumptuous, and luxurious. Du Bac highly commended it. The second consisted of as many dishes as the former, filled solely with different sorts of pickles, which he approved of equally, expressing no astonishment whatever. Towards the conclusion of supper, the minister suddenly got up whistling, and extinguished all the lights. Upon that the stranger observed that he preferred talking in the dark. The

lamps were then restored as before, and the king commenced a serious discourse, in the midst of which, Rosni broke out into a love song, kicked off his boots, and danced about the room."

"I should not have supposed, sir," said Du Bac to the king, "that your friend had been so active a man."

"Plague on your stupidity," cried Henry in a passion, "to sit unmoved at such strange behaviour; how do you contrive to preserve this inflexibility? I'm curious to know?"

"Aye," replied Du Bac; "but of all the vices that belong to our race, I hate curiosity the worst,"—and with that he dealt the monarch such a slap in the face as resounded through the whole house. The king rose instantly, and clapped his hand to his sword, but meeting the eye of his minister, they looked at each other for a moment, and then both burst into a fit of laughter, which had not ended when Du Bac took leave with the utmost politeness."

This anecdote, related by a smart, distin-

guished, and showy girl, was, of course, received with unanimous plaudits: and four other stories were told by different individuals before the party retired to rest; the particulars of which, however, have not reached us.

CHAPTER XV.

The company that had parted over night in such jollity and intimacy, seemed to be all tongue-tied upon meeting each other again at the breakfast-board ; and nothing passed for a considerable time that could, by any ingenuity of language, have been called general conversation. Short, abrupt remarks, and monosyllabic answers, and those very scanty, were all that could be extorted. The charm, however, was at length broken by the aid of strong beer, venison pasty, and other viands, both hot and cold, flanked by hams, as well of mutton as pork, neats' and sheep s tongues cured at home, and rein-deer's, &c. imported from Sweden ; not to omit the exquisite dried salmon, and stimulating haddock, smoked or prepared in the sun. Wines, and other appropriate liquors were at hand to suit these various dainties, besides fruit, milk and cream,

some plain, and some beat up in all sorts of fantastical vagaries. The restoration of the party to easy, flowing, and familiar prattle, was as if some benevolent enchanter had waved his wand over a city turned into stone; when, lo! all, from the scavenger with the dust cart, to the monarch at the head of his guards, resume those occupations without the slightest inconvenience, which the fairy Barbarina, Diabola, Furiosa, or some such name, had most vexatiously obstructed for the space of—never less than a century. Observations were now poured forth in so copious a stream, that the difficulty was to secure an auditor. At length, with much ado, Sir Giles collected the sense of the company to be in favour of hawking, as the morning was fair, with a light air of wind.

"Have you any good, clever, make hawks, Sir Giles?" said young Alfreton.

"Oh, we don't say much as to ours, when such prices are given by the fine cavaliers about the court. Did you bring the Norwegian, Sir George?"

"I have brought him," returned the baronet; "but he's hardly in order: shy and disdainful. Waddilove had him in training all the winter months, and the Lord only knows what mischief that blockhead has done. This bird, Mistress Blanche, my late father coaxed out of Sir Thomas Monson, who gave a thousand pounds for a cast of 'em. Now I'll tell you a peculiarity about him, which you might collect all the falcons in Scandinavia without meeting in another ——."

"I much fear, Sir George," replied Blanche, "that I shall disgrace myself on the topic; my ignorance is more gross upon this subject than you could even imagine."

"No! is it really? Aha—very different, I take it, with your sister, Elinor; she can tell one bird from another, I'll swear it; I see it by her eye!"

Elinor, with visible delight, though partially suppressed by the becoming blush of diffidence, admitted, that if she could be said to know any thing, it was perhaps a little about hawks.

Upon this an abstruse and learned discus-

sion ensued, in which Elinor bore her part very creditably; at least, to the ignorant she appeared so to do. As she complained of one for bating, another for raking, praised the arms of a third, and the sails of a fourth; and all this interspersed and tied together, with a plentiful use of the terms, pounces, lure, petty singles, and much of the same sort, did vastly well.

To say the truth, we believe she was a happier and greater person during this disquisition, than when all were mounted and proceeding, bird on fist for the most part, to the scene of action. At that time, the young men were too closely engaged with their hawks, and the falconers in waiting, to converse much with the ladies; and what attention was bestowed upon them, Alice Stanley and her eldest sister pretty entirely engrossed. They were now winding up the side of a hill, and already commanded an extensive view of the country around, when Sir Giles exclaimed—"Who's that I see in the ash-lane there? 'Tis he: no 'tisn't. Yes, I'll be shot if it be'nt

Ned Stone. Why be'nt going right for Belton now. Hollo! hollo! Ned!—this way! to the left, you dolt!" And with that, for the man appeared not to hear him, the knight clapped spurs to his horse, descended the hill, and, crossing a meadow or two, came full in upon the person he had been calling to, at the end of a lane. Sir Giles was followed by Blanche and Lord Alfreton. The latter, caring more about his companion than the probability of sport, had left the main company to go with her; and Blanche rode after her father, because she knew the man as well as he did: her heart beat at the sight of him, and in the flutter and fever of her spirits, she never considered the dignity or propriety of such a step.

"Why, sure," cried the man, reining up his horse, and doffing his cap, "it must be your worship."

"What brings thee here, Ned?—How dost do?—Where dost come from?"

"From Mondomer, Sir Giles: master and I ha' been down these four days by ourselves. Hope I see your worship well, and all the

noble family; and Mistress Harlande—or, Lord bless your ladyship!" bowing at the same time to Blanche, who returned it in the kindest manner.

"Why, now," said the knight, "hast thee been so often about these here lands, and doesn't know thy way to Belton?"

"I—I was not making for the hall, your honour, Sir Giles, not just yet or so."

"No! where wast going then? Come, gie's thy messages, and letters, and things."

The man looked first on the ground, then on both sides of him, and then on the ground again; and Blanche turned so pale, that it was astonishing neither of the others noticed it.

"Why, sir," stammered out Stone at length, "your honour wouldn't wish to blame a poor lad; and my master, Sir Hugh, did gi' me leave to come over to Belton—a' did, indeed. But I beg pardon, for to be honest wi' your worship, I never was in the mind to show myself at the hall; for as my master never charged me with no letter, or any thing o' that, I meant, pray your honour forgie me—

but I meant to pass all my time wi' a sweetheart o' my own, and go back to Mondomer, nobody the wiser."

"Do'st mean to say, fellow," cried Sir Giles, in an angry manner, "that thy master gave leave to come over here upon thine own bus'ness, without sending even a civil word to the hall?"

"He gi' me no message, Sir Giles, when I asked leave," replied the other, "so I didn't go to stay for one."

"To be sure you did not, Ned," observed Blanche; "and you were quite right. The poor fellow, father, was naturally in a great hurry to see—to see—" Here she broke off for nearly a minute. "Do not be rough with him, father, he's a very old acquaintance. But I tell you what, Ned, you must come up to the hall before you return, and get something good to eat and drink. Nobody will delay you about letters."

She then turned away abruptly, and let her horse stray at his pleasure to some distance from the rest. The man, Ned, too, appeared

to comprehend her distress, as his voice faltered extremely in wishing Sir Giles a good morning. The knight rode up quick to his daughter's side.

"Don't vex thee so, my sweetest girl," he whispered, pressing her hand; they be'nt worth——howsumever, I'll make thy excuse: go home, my love; the racket and noise 'ull be too much for thee;" and he proceeded to inform Lord Alfreton of her having been oppressed with a bad headach the whole day, adding circumstances about some hope that the air of the hills might carry it off, which was disappointed, however. As his lordship was inflexible upon escorting her to Belton, Blanche gave way to him, and even exerted herself to talk as they returned: but upon her arrival she withdrew to her own apartment.

Sir Giles, in great indignation at almost the only thing in this world that could have made him truly uneasy—that is to say, any unkindness towards his beloved daughter—disgusted too at having been imposed upon by protestations, which, as he conceived, were the mere

idle feeling of the moment, when Hugh Mondomer was last in Cumberland, had no heart for resuming the morning's diversion; which, nevertheless, for want of something else, he was about to do, had not Sir George Stanley, at this moment, come down from the hill in much wrath and vexation.

His famous hawk, the Norwegian, it seemed, had been utterly spoiled.

"Would you believe it, Sir Giles," the baronet exclaimed on seeing him, "in flying from my fist, the confounded stupid brute took stand on the ground six times running? no forcing him to fly a turn—no lure—nothing. I had a duck by the wing for ten minutes together: but all wouldn't do. I'm only vexed that I didn't wring the neck of him. That, however, or something worse, shall be done to Waddilove, the feeder, or I'm strangely mistaken."

Sir Giles made the proper sympathetic observations, and it soon appeared that upon the failure of his own bird, the baronet had not patience or inclination to await the display

of any other person's, and now bethought him of a commission, which his uncle, General Stanley, had requested him to execute in those parts.

"Look ye here, my good friend; here's a notable toy for you!" said he, showing a large ring of very curious workmanship, that opened like a watch, by the touch of a spring. "But do not let me keep you from the sport."

"Not at all; not at all," returned the knight, examining the ring: "I have no intention o' joining 'em again; they're over at Nettlebury Craigs by this time. Why, 'tis a cleverish kind of knick-knackery sort of an affair: what be the meaning on't?"

"That's more than I can say: but I've special orders to deliver it with my own hand, on the part of the Countess of Essex. Pray, Sir Giles, have you not a neighbour of the name of Vavasore?"

"Indeed have I. Why a' knows all the world. And is that gew-gaw from a fine lady to be given to such as he?"

"I know nothing of him," returned the

other, "nor ever saw him. Who is he? and what?"

"He can be a huge clever kind of fellow, and entertaining; but he's odd, and grave as an archbishop: in a something of a scrape, you must understand, and I provided 'un with 's present habitation: a papist, I believe. Now I harboured 'un out o' regard to his family, old friends of mine; benefactors, truly, in former times. Besides, this Vavasore himself, how a' comes by it I can't say, but ha' gie' me valuable information, though it may be not over agreeable, what concerned one's own family."

"Would it be too much," said the baronet, "if you are really disinclined to follow the sportsmen, to request an introduction from you, Sir Giles, to this gentleman?"

"By no means: like it of all things. We must go at a pretty round pace though, to be back by dinner."

They set forward accordingly, at a brisk trot, for a few miles to the northward, and

passing, with some heed to the footing of their horses, through a wide yawning gap in a stone wall, entered what had been the garden of the monastery, and moving on between the abbey and one of those barn-looking places that Lord Alfreton had observed upon the morning before, reached an irregular building, partly stone and partly brick, of dismal appearance, with remarkably few windows in proportion to its size, and those long, narrow, and pointed like the windows of the church adjoining.

"Does your friend think it necessary to make preparation for us?" observed Sir George Stanley: "I saw him move from the porch into the house this moment."

"Not very fond o' strangers," returned the knight; "but come, fasten your horse in this shed. Why, Master Vavasore! what, ho! house here! house!" cried he, knocking against the doors and wainscotting as they entered, for the former was wide open.

They had scarcely gained the hall, which

looked like the temple of desolation, when the resident approached them from another quarter, with a stately bow, and much formal civility, Stanley thought, dignity, of address. He was clothed in a deep purple cloak, vest of blue velvet, somewhat faded, with slashed sleeves; long basket-hilted sword by his side, and wore the boots of a dusty brown, then so very general, pushed down below the middle of his leg.

A square-built, formidable figure from the waist upwards; but slightly made otherwise. Whether his countenance was naturally advantageous or not couldn't well be discovered, on account of a blood-red scar all down one side of his face, and a green bandage drawn almost entirely across the other, which covered the eye, passing over his head, and tying under the chin. For this phenomenon Sir Giles had prepared his visitor as they rode, apprizing him that, though the sight of one eye was totally gone, it yet gave so much uneasiness, that continual applications were requisite.

After the introduction, Sir George delivered the ring, mentioning by whom it had been intrusted to him.

" I am much beholden to you, sir," said Vavasore: " one would scarcely conceive a bauble of this sort to be acceptable to an old soldier; but so it is, and even important, though not for its own value."

" Rather, I imagine, for the sake of the lovely donor," said Stanley.

Vavasore smiled in scorn.

" I look like a favourite of the fair, do I not, young gentleman? Alas! if the weak and unhappy being who sent it had listened to the counsels of a friend, who meant honestly, though blunt perhaps, and unconciliating in speech, much present evil might have been avoided, and more future."

" Master Vavasore," said Sir Giles, " thee do'stn't like to be teased wi' questions: and no wonder — who does? But thus much I will say, that by what I ha' heard, 'twould have been better for this here countess, and one who

was an hereditary-like friend o' mine, if they had never seen each other."

"You speak my very thoughts, my honoured benefactor," replied Vavasore: "you will do me the justice to allow I have dealt plainly and fairly with you since our acquaintance began: I ever told you that there were circumstances which, I trust, without shame, without the reproach of my own conscience," (he added these words in a firm and manly tone,) "I was absolutely compelled to be reserved upon. The cause of my intimacy with this wretched Countess of Essex is one of them. But I make no scruple to declare that your observation coincides with the dismal anticipations of my own mind. 'Tis to be hoped that she and the Lady de Lyle will satisfy themselves in this world: they have no other to look forward to."

Sir Giles shuddered audibly; and the young baronet observed, "One ought not, to be sure, rashly to repeat every rumour. But you, sir, seem to have been thrown so much among them, that I cannot doubt but you know; yes,

you must know, what is in my thoughts at this moment."

"Not unless you will please to tell me, sir," returned the other, calmly.

"Why, it was said—it was whispered in a certain set, that one of the two ladies, if not both, had dealings over the water!"

"Over where?"

"Nay, you must understand me; you, who are so intimately acquainted with their proceedings, and so deep in your penetration. Why, with the old devil at Lambeth!"

"But all this is Greek to me," said Sir Giles.

"Young gentleman," said Vavasore, coolly, but earnestly, to Sir George Stanley, "those women have created many enemies by their arrogance and insolence: but do not go too far. And let me tell you this much for your gratification, the man you allude to, (if, indeed, he was a man, for he had horrible powers), will betray no more to their destruction. He's off! his time is out! he's gone to his master!"

"How! dead, say you?"

"What if this very ring should communicate the fact?" returned Vavasore.

"Now, come, Master Vavasore," said the old knight, in considerable impatience; "tell us, Sir George. I'm all thrown out, as it were. What is all this about Lambeth, and devils, and death?"

"Your friend, sir," replied Vavasore, "will doubtless explain these allusions as you return. Is the general officer your near relation, Sir George Stanley?"

"He is, sir."

"A good soldier!" continued the other: "we served together in the Netherlands during the government of Requesens."

But Sir Giles, now eager for Stanley's information, which, however, in the result, was reluctantly given, and proved very unintelligible, made objections to their longer stay, urging something about his dinner; and Vavasore, who could not be prevailed upon to accompany them to Belton, attended his visitors to their horses with much politeness and ceremony.

CHAPTER XVI.

During nearly the whole of the next day, the weather was so uncertain as to prevent any regular scheme of diversion.

The ladies fidgetted from window to window, and from room to room: two games at draughts were at last yawned through by Margaret and Alice Stanley, for Blanche had retired with a book to her own chamber; and the boots of the men were heard creaking in every part of the house.

Towards noon, however, a gleam of sunshine enabled some of them to descend the green slope in front of the hall; and as the approaching dinner hour prevented them from going farther, young Alfreton brought out a seat for Alice, which was placed in a warm situation in the meadow, at the foot of the hill.

This manœuvre relieved the other men by affording them momentary employment; and, without loss of time, Blanche and Elinor (for

the other sister had not ventured out) were accommodated in the same manner.

"And will you, in truth, be so rash and unaccountably silly as to do that now?" said Alice Stanley.

"Your admonition comes too late, fair lady," returned Edward Alfreton, who, wrapped in his cloak, had thrown himself all along upon the damp grass at her feet.

"I protest," said she, with a smile and curl of the mouth that was peculiar to her, "you military men are ready to brave death in all forms, and under all circumstances: indeed it seems to me that you go out of your way to defy him."

"But however you may despise the grim monarch himself," added Blanche, "you will hardly, I think, be reconciled to some of his courtiers and forerunners, such as cramps, coughs, agues, &c. Let me advise you, Captain Alfreton, do get up."

"I had rather," said the youth, wallowing and sprawling about, "catch all the united disorders that ever plagued mankind, by lying

here; I had rather perish at Mistress Stanley's feet, though she were to sneer at me the whole time, as she always does; I had rather do that, than"—(here he paused as if thinking of something else)—" Oh! what an odd thing the concatenation, as I think you call it, of our ideas is! how should that solemn ass, Buttingall, have come into my head, from any thing I was saying?"

" Nay, I'm sure we cannot tell," said Alice, " the result seems flattering though to those whom you were talking to, or at least, about."

" Sneer, aye sneering, that was the word: Heaven forgive me, but I don't think I was ever twice in that fellow's company in my life, without attempting to annoy him, and succeeding. I say, Stanley—Geoffrey I mean, was you one of the party at Lord Mondomer's on—I forget the day,—when that altercation happened?"

" No," replied Geoffrey, " it was my father and James, and all entirely owing to them that the thing was no more heard of."

" I think," continued Edward, " young

Hugh Mondomer showed us a little of what stuff he was made, that day. Wine, Geoffrey, wine draws a fellow out. I was quite amazed The mild, modest Master Hugh, who never spoke a word in a large company without blushing up to the ears like a great girl! You never saw any thing so struck as Rochester, absolutely dumb at last, with astonishment and indignation."

"It doesn't surprise me so much," said the other: "bless your soul, Edward, I know Hugh better than you do; he's a resolute chap if he takes a thing into his head; and you may believe me the more, for I don't like the fellow: he's one of those that make such a fuss about their principles. Why, who's against religion, I should be glad to know?—But what has it to do with every day in the week, and all the common occurrences of life?"

"Aye, what indeed?" cried Edward.—"That youngster always seemed to me like a parson with a sword by his side."

"I have no acquaintance with Sir Hugh Mondomer," observed Lord Alfreton, "but

have happened to hear a good deal of him; do you mean to say that he obtrudes the sort of fanatical gibberish on all occasions which"—

"Oh, no, no, no!" said Blanche, who, since the commencement of this discourse, had been (or appeared to be) occupied by sorting flowers, or different kinds of grass, in her lap, with her head closely bent down to her work.

"Not in the least, my Lord Alfreton, not in the slightest degree," said Alice Stanley. "He's a pretty young man, Sir Hugh Mondomer is, I assure you. With his religious impressions I never troubled my head. They may be more strict than suits my cousin Geoffrey's convenience, but the charge of modesty cannot indeed be got over: with regard to that failing, our friends here have certainly a decided advantage over him."

"There again," cried young Alfreton; "I protest, Mistress Alice, you keep a tight hand upon me: why, Geoffrey, your fair cousin has disposed of us both."—But Geoffrey did not much relish her observations, and looked glum.

"After all," said Alice, "we are talking before those who must know Sir Hugh as well as I know my own brother, though they've said so little about him,"—and with that she bent an arch scrutinizing look, first upon one sister, and then on the other."

"No, we do not," cried Elinor, eager to step forward in her sister's relief;—"we do not, *now*, indeed. To be sure, when Hugh was a boy, or little more than a boy, Belton was his own home like; and then, of course, you know, we all lived—lived very much together. I always thought, in those days, that he had a kind and affectionate heart: then, he laughed at my father's jokes, and they suited so.—Not that he thought in particular of us, you see,—not a bit more about one than another, perhaps. Why, you don't understand it, he was just a brother to all of us; he was, I give you my word."

"My little dear," said Alice, taking her hand with a laugh, "you need not be so earnest, nobody contradicts you."

But Blanche here interposed, and with a

composure, of which a few minutes before she did not conceive herself capable, observed :—

" All the Mondomers have ever been the closest friends of our family; and Sir Hugh was, undoubtedly, the most intimate acquaintance we three had in the world. It is a subject of much, of deep regret to us all," she added, with some hesitation of voice; " but perhaps extremely natural, that upon coming out in the world, and forming new connexions, his mind should be estranged—that is, diverted for the time, from his earliest—his country friends. And young men are apt, I believe, to be indolent and careless about writing."

" Don't talk of letters, Mistress Blanche," said Edward Alfreton, " unless you wish to spoil my dinner, reflexions, conversation, supper, and sleep. I owe my sister, Sophia, two letters, and Beatrice, upon my life, five, at this blessed moment!"

" You will not clear off much of that debt before dinner," said Elinor, " for there goes the ten-minute bell."

Continued showers, or rather one prolonged storm of rain, through the remainder of the day, produced a heavy afternoon, and great was the general exhilaration when lights were introduced full three quarters of an hour before the usual time. Then one of the ladies, (Blanche for the most part) being stationed at the spinet, the rest of the party, including several of the principal servants, and by no means leaving out the old knight himself, took to dancing with an alacrity and glee that totally defeated all power of the dismal evening to depress them.

Supper was announced before they could have supposed it possible, and afterwards a good deal of singing took place, some very tolerable, and some very bad; but all was applauded, even down to Sir Giles's hunting song; an astonishing performance, as to the strength of lungs it exhibited for one of his age, and the complete freedom from all fetters of tune with which it was executed. Elinor gave them (and prettily enough) one of her native northern ballads.

" Those old songs," said Lord Alfreton, " that are handed down in particular districts from father to son, are, eight out of ten, at least, all about fighting."

" And wouldn't it be odd if they were not?" said Sir Giles. " What was o' so much consequence in former times, I'd be glad to know? Here we had your Scottish marauders on one side, and Northumberland prickers on t'other, besides vagabond rascals, and plenty on 'em of our own."

" Aye," added Edward, " and then the downright government (as I call 'em) wars with Scotland, and regular campaigns: it has often been a wonder to me, that we have so few ballads about them, and so many about partial skirmishes of no consequence, like Chevy Chase, perhaps the best of them all."

" Do you call that a mere skirmish?" said his brother.

" Why, what do you call it?" returned Edward.

" I call it a regular, important, and bloody battle," replied the eldest, " fought between

the most powerful chieftains of each kingdom, though during a weak reign, I grant you, and without the king's having any thing to do with it. The scene of action must be only a few miles from hence, I'm confident."

Sir Giles was here about to speak as well as Elinor, but both were cut short by young Alfreton.

"How d'ye make that out, Lionel, when every body knows 'twas fought on the Scottish side of the hills?"

"To be sure it was," added Geoffrey Stanley.

"I should certainly have concluded it," said Alice, "from Earl Percy's making a vow,"

"His pleasure in the *Scottish* woods
"Three summer days to take."

"Ah, that did very well for the poet," replied Lord Alfreton; "or Percy might have intended it, probably; but the Scots were beforehand with him, and the battle undoubtedly took place on this side the border."

"Now, what will you stake upon that?" said his brother.

" Aye, come," cried Geoffrey, " the question is not, Whether it's more or less near to this place? but your words were—This side the"——

" Don't ye lay any wagers, you foolish boys," roared Sir Giles; " ye'll never be able to come to a proof on't. Tell thee what, Ned, thy brother's most likely in the right: the fight were cert'nly o' this side the border, as the border be now a-days."

" But the Scots, I suppose," said Blanche, " thought otherwise in King Richard the Second's time."

" That's just the thing," cried the knight. " Why, help your heart, my Lord Alfreton, I be no baby myself, and I ha' talked to old Daubeney, as lived to a hundred and twenty-eight, and had his mind all sound to within a month or two of's death,—and he always heard from the oldest fellows he ever knowed, that the kings of Scotland, in those days, claimed all to the south side of the Cheviots, and at one time or other had best part o' Cumberland."

"But if this field of battle is so near," said Sir George Stanley, "it might be a pleasantish excursion for us to go and see what we can make of it."

"Indeed would it," exclaimed the knight, rubbing his hands with much pleasure; "we be quite within reach; we just cross into Northumberland; I insist upon it; come, no objections, no difficulties—why shouldn't to-morrow do?"

"I should like it excessively," said Alice Stanley.

"Nobody thinks of difficulties, father," cried Elinor.

"Oh, by all means, let us, let us," said others.

"We must be off betimes," observed Sir Giles, rising from his seat; "a good two-and-twenty miles, I promise ye. I must speak, however, to Hart, Tom, and Philip, about it to-night."

"And we are later than usual, as it is, Sir Giles," said Alice: which intimation was followed by a general breaking up.

Light are the slumbers of young persons with the world before them promising enjoyment in general, and certain detached schemes of pleasure soliciting them at the time, in particular. Light are also the slumbers of old people with good constitutions and admirable tempers, like Sir Giles. Not that he had escaped the common lot of mortality,—very very grievously had he partaken of it: but of that hereafter.

Whatever evils he had been afflicted by in life, were most surely disregarded when he was hastening through every man's room with a lantern, and so stentorian a shout as brought them all to the breakfast table, and the ladies very shortly after them, at such an hour as we are really afraid to mention. Suffice it to say, that soon after six they were all on horseback, and in progress towards the sources of the river Rhead, in Northumberland.

Blanche, only, (who had made no objection whatever when this expedition was proposed) obtained five minutes' audience of her father

before breakfast was concluded, and stated at once her disinclination to be of the party, unless he particularly wished it. The village of Otterbourne (she bade him remember) was within a very short distance of Mondomer Castle.

"Well, well, what o' that?" said Sir Giles, "ar't thee to be deprived of all pleasure because"——

"Nay, father, it is not a question of pride, or point of dignity: we have often talked this over, you know. Don't misunderstand me. I could meet Hugh readily enough, if it were necessary; but it would be no satisfaction to me to bear myself coldly by him, and endeavour to make him uneasy. I am sure, my dear sir, we are always the worse after such efforts. A certain degree of spirit (but spirit of a very questionable nature) keeps one up for the time, and afterwards I should suffer the bitter reflexion of having been as unkind as I possibly could, perhaps. All is over between us, I am quite aware of that. Give me time, father, and I shall be very well again."

" My dearest girl, I don't understand this, and it's vastly disagreeable to me. The devil take 'em all, I say !"

" Nay, stop," cried Blanche, pressing his arm.

" But why," said Sir Giles, " am I obliged, besides every other infernal vexation, to leave thee, my darling? 'Thou'rt to me, aye, and to every body else too, more than half the pleasure of the whole jaunt, my love. But, at any rate, we shan't be going up to Mondomer Castle, not we."

" Indeed, father, unless you particularly desire it, I had rather remain. He may not indeed be met with, but he's alone at the castle, you'll recollect; and as our excursion must be heard of at Mondomer, there is surely an awkwardness, at least so it strikes me. Then think how many of our own company may be inclined to see the place when once so near it. They are all of them his acquaintance, some very intimately so.

Without entering entirely into the delicacy of her feelings, Sir Giles clearly perceived

that his daughter would be distressed by his pressing her farther; and as he had the utmost confidence in her judgment, even when he did not exactly comprehend it, he acquiesced in her determination. Some excuse was made about household affairs, and her intended absence universally deplored, but Lord Alfreton was utterly overthrown by it. He peevishly turned away by himself, and, unused to control, was on the point of insisting upon remaining behind with her; when his better reflexions convinced him of the extreme impropriety and folly of such a proposal, and how absolutely certain it was to be declined both by father and daughter, besides rendering his passion suspected by the other young men, and giving them a subject for ridicule at his expense, the very idea of which made him writhe with agony. He went on therefore, with the rest, in gloom and sullenness, till a genial glow of sunshine (for his feelings, though extremely quick and susceptible, were by no means deep) so far restored his temper,

as to induce him to converse with the two younger Harlande girls, and their prattle soon exalted him into spirits as lively as those he had waked with at the first dawn of morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

The track (for to call it a road would be doing it injustice) which led them across the country into Northumberland, was completely impervious for horsemen even, during the winter months, and not greatly improved by the rains of the preceding day.

But it became somewhat better when they had cleared the low shady lanes in the vicinity of Belton Hall, and found themselves upon the open waste that extended for many miles along their route, without a single grand or pleasing feature to redeem the cheerless, swampy, barren insipidity around them.

They had not proceeded far over these wilds, when Margaret Harlande pointed out an object at great distance to the left, which seemed to approach them.

It was ascertained to be a man on horseback.

" Baddish riding in the fen there, faith," said Sir Giles: " I did'nt think 'tad been possible."

" A soldier, I take it, by his plume," said Geoffrey Stanley.

" I think not," observed the younger Alfreton; " that feather is pretty universally worn, and the wrapping cloak proves nothing at all."

" I've a notion, Sir Giles, 'tis our Lannercost friend, there," said Sir George Stanley.

" No! d'ye think so?—let's see—aye, aye, it be he sure enough," returned the knight; and by this time Vavasore was plainly seen on a powerful black steed, dashing through the morass, in which the horse sunk at times up to his middle, but struggled through, and gained the firm track along which the Belton party rode.

Vavasore saluted them, bowed to Sir George Stanley in particular, and carelessly replying to Sir Giles's jesting remarks upon his judicious choice of ground for a morning's ride, went on with the rest, 'till he found an oppor-

tunity of making the knight a signal to fall back into the rear.

"Go you on—get forward, get forward," said Sir Giles to the servants. "I want to have some talk with this gentleman, and shall soon catch ye all up again."

"Now, Master Vavasore, your commands with me?"

"I had intended, Sir Giles, to have waited upon you at the hall this morning, but perceive that I should have lost my labour. This meeting is fortunate."

"Yes, 'tis," replied the knight; "well, go on; we can have our say here."

"I fear you may have deemed it presumptuous, my honoured friend, when I occasionally directed my conversation to subjects connected with your own family, and of a delicate nature. My only excuse is, that I arrived here possessed of very extraordinary information upon these points; and from what has already passed between us, you are, perhaps, convinced, that I wish to use it solely

for your advantage, as, in gratitude, I am bound to do."

"Say no more! say no more, Master Vavasore. Presuming! no: thought it a bit oddish, I must confess; but never doubted thee for a friendly, honest kind o' man."

"I observe," said Vavasore, "that the young lady, your eldest daughter, is not of this party. You are proceeding eastward, towards Mondomer, I imagine?"

"And ben't we at liberty to take our pleasure in these parts because o' they? No—not to Mondomer! What be the Mondomers to us? But we mean to go to the neighbourhood on't for our own satisfaction. There's been a disputing, I think, about the fight in old times at Otterbourne: now I'll tell thee how 't was. Thee'st heard the ballad about Percy and Douglas and them, what they call ——."

"Oh, I perfectly comprehend, Sir Giles, your plan for a day's amusement," returned the other, with his features disposed to some-

thing like a smile; "but allow me to say, that if accidental, it is not unfortunate that your eldest daughter should be absent. Are you aware of young Mondomer being established there, at present?"

"Yes," said Sir Giles, "I've know'd it these two days."

To this Vavasore made no answer, but rode on in silence. After some time, he abruptly resumed the conversation.

"I do really wish to serve you, Sir Giles," laying his hand, at the same instant, upon the knight's arm: "be firm, be vigilant; and, as you value your happiness, crush the first movements, the remotest tendency to future intercourse, engagement, or whatever they may call it, between those young persons."

"I tell thee again, as I've told thee over and over before," said Sir Giles, "that it won't be, and it can't be. We're offended wi' the family: no matter why. And Blanche be a good lass as ever was, wi' a becoming spirit of her own too, Master Vavasore. Thank ye heartily for all friendly dispositions; but don't

trouble thy head no more about it—the thing be for ever at an end."

"Be not too sure of that, my worthy friend," returned the other: "I shall astonish you, but am obliged to speak out. If any, the least, approximation shall hereafter be made towards an union between one of your children and that slip of the Mondomer stock, as certainly as the night follows the day, will her miserable destruction be the consequence."

"What the devil d'ye mean by that?" cried the knight, in wrath. "Come, come, sir, there's a something in this mode o' talking, as I'm not used to: consider your situation and that, here, and what I ha' done for thee, and let's ha' no more meddling in my concerns."

Vavasore looked disconcerted.

"You are angry, my good friend," said he, "and your anger distresses me, though duty may oblige me to provoke it; for I will not deny that I have spoken the truth, and what the welfare of all your family is concerned in attending to. But I forbear to urge the sub-

ject beyond what is necessary. It is painful to me to be prevented from explaining myself in the degree that an honest, open nature prompts me to, and without mysterious threats of future evil. We all know how frequently inconsiderate marriages, the fruit of headstrong passions in persons scarcely beyond their childhood, become the direst of curses!"

Here Sir Giles Harlande uttered a deep sigh or groan, smote his forehead violently with his right hand, and seemed in unusual agitation! The other broke off from speaking, and stared at him with an air of great surprise and concern.

"We've had too much o' this talk, I think," said Sir Giles, after a while. "Don't be uneasy, Master Vavasore: dost mean well, and kindly, I do verily believe; but thy remarks be unlucky to-day, or dark, or somewhat; and I feel a twinge of an old complaint: good morning t' ye; shall ha' much ado to get up wi' the rest on 'em."

So saying, he put his horse to the gallop,

and, before Vavasore made any reply, had stretched far away, to recover the lost ground; while his companion made no attempt to follow, but pursued his own course toward Lannercost.

Upon Sir Giles rejoining the others, it was soon perceived that something had gone wrong.

"What's the matter with your father?" said Sir George Stanley apart to Elinor: "he seems uncommonly ruffled."

"More so than I have seen him," she replied, "for many months. I cannot inform you what it is; but I well know there is a subject that will distress him dreadfully. An old woman of the village, who nursed all of us, said something or other to him last Christmas eve, that I thought would have ruined all the mirth and comfort of the season. But my father, as you know, Sir George, is of a lively temper, and soon recovers himself."

"'Tis enough to lower the finest spirits in England," returned the baronet, "to have any intercourse with that reserved, stately, incom-

prehensible ——. However, the first cup of wine at dinner, I take it, will set every thing right again."

This prophecy was most exactly and satisfactorily fulfilled when they arrived at the mansion of a tenant of the old knight's, within four miles of the place they were going to see. Here they had proposed dining, and sent on one of their followers accordingly; not with the vain hope of finding at the farmer's house suitable provisions for that formidable assembly, but in order to give him timely notice to prepare a room, and certain inferior articles of refreshment. For the essentials, such as cold fowls, ham, and pasties, with sundry flasks of excellent old wine, a sumpter-horse in attendance on the party had been accommodating enough to carry.

This interlude at a farm, agreeably situated near the foot of the Cheviot hills, and in a tolerably well-wooded country again, raised the spirits of such as enjoyed good ones, and restored the hilarity of all that might have been a little out of sorts. For the remainder of

their ride the ascents were steep and frequent; and whenever a chasm among the hills afforded them a prospect, the Mondomer woods, extending far beyond what the eye could reach, attracted every body's attention. The two Harlande girls viewed them with a painful interest, conversing, at intervals, with each other, but in so low a tone as not to be overheard; while Alice Stanley broke forth in loud and lavish encomiums upon all she saw, and all she imagined. When they reached the object of their expedition, it proved (as is very usual) not particularly worth all the trouble that had been taken about it. There was still, however, enough of interest attached to the village, in Lord Alfreton's idea, to draw from him this remark, with a triumphant air:—

"And you will endeavour to persuade me, I suppose, that towards the end of the fourteenth century this village was allowed to be on the Scottish side of the border! Then again, as to the nature of the battle, Master Edward: look at those works to your left, as regular and perfect an entrenchment as you'll

meet with in any part of the island. That doesn't much savour of a casual skirmish, I think — hey, Edward?"

"How are you certain that this was really the scene of action?" said his brother.

"Oh, that the affair of Otterbourne was the battle recorded in the ballad, is not a point to be questioned: 'tis a decided matter of history."

"I don't know any such thing," said the youngest.

"That is to say, you will not admit yourself to have been mistaken," observed Lord Alfreton.

"I am not so clear, for my part," said one or other of the Stanleys, "as to those entrenchments."

"Nor I either, by Jupiter!" cried Edward Alfreton. "Let's come up nearer, and look a little into those notable works and military positions."

This proposal was instantly followed up by all the men except Sir Giles, who, having favoured them over-night with all he had to

say upon the subject, cared not a button for the renewal of the argument, and continued to saunter on with the young ladies, to whom he was endeavouring to point out the course of the river in the meadows below, in spite of its devious windings through country often of a nature to conceal it.

While thus engaged, they passed a knot of firs, Elinor riding somewhat in front. She turned a corner of the clump before the rest, and immediately an exclamation was heard from her, which almost amounted to a scream.

"Heaven and earth! can it be!" exclaimed Hugh Mondomer, rushing up to her, and devouring her hand with kisses that would certainly not have been confined to the hand if he could have reached higher, for he was on foot when she suddenly presented herself to his notice.

Upon the appearance of the others, however, he seemed to recollect himself, quitted Elinor, and advanced, but with a more doubtful manner, and an anxious, inquiring eye.

Sir Giles's address was to such a degree

awkward, embarrassed, and whimsical, that Alice, who could not at all comprehend these strange evolutions, was extremely tempted to laugh; and did, indeed, at first, give way to that temptation, but ceased, upon perceiving distress and perplexity so strongly marked upon Hugh's countenance as to be quite pitiable. Sir Giles bowed coldly, and as he imagined, probably, with great dignity. Hugh came forward, close up to his old friend's horse; but as no hand was extended to him, his countenance fell, and he looked very unhappy. Sir Giles first broke silence.

"We ha' just come over—we be just come here to-day," said he, with much rapidity and confusion, "to see into a thing, to settle a matter, what there was some difference upon, as to which side o' the border 'twas, and just, may be, look at the country round a little; but never intended to go on,—never beyond Otterbourne, that is"——

"My dear good friend," replied Hugh, "what can be the meaning of all this? Why

do you take pains to tell me what you have just done? I am very, very, sorry to hear it. I thought, of course, you were coming on to the castle, and hoped it so earnestly! I have much to say to you, and that would have given an opportunity for every thing. You are surely changed, all of you, and what's the reason of it? Won't you speak to me, either, Margaret?"

She held out her hand to him, and muttered something of good wishes.

"Indeed, Hugh, I must say," said Elinor, with tears in her eyes, "that if there is any difference between us from when we last parted—you best know——"

"Can't thee hold thy peace?—Be quiet, girl," said Sir Giles, in so harsh a tone, that Alice Stanley began to think the scene rather unpleasant than diverting; and to put an end to it, addressed a civil observation to Hugh about the castle and place.

"If you are pleased to approve it, madam, and our friends here will have the kindness—

I had almost said the charity, to accompany you——"

He pronounced those words in so vehement and impassioned a manner, that Sir Giles, (more affected than he thought fit to allow) interrupted him.

"No, no, Sir Hugh, it can't be—excuse me, Mistress Alice, but it cannot, indeed. Much obliged though, much obliged, Sir Hugh."

He then turned as if to ride away, but did not move far, and the ladies still lingered.

"Can you actually use me thus?" said Hugh: "I feel as if it were all a dream! Did you only come over here for the purpose of slighting me even more than you have done before, and breaking my heart? Why do not you *all* appear? Oh! do, do, but let me see her this once. She, I am confident, will explain why you use me so."

He here hung down his head, in such evident, bitter grief, that Alice Stanley, whose darkness was by degrees dispelled, entered into, and heartily commiserated his situation:

while of the other three, the girls positively could not speak for their tears; and Sir Giles, (though still resolved to be sturdy) gave him to understand that Blanche was accidentally detained by slight indisposition at home.

Not that poor Hugh believed it was accident; but having once induced Sir Giles to mention her name, he meant (regardless of their coldness, or Alice's presence) to have followed up the subject with an impetuosity that must have been every thing but resistless; and as the heart of the old gentleman already yearned towards him, we feel strongly inclined to believe that he would ultimately have succeeded in drawing the whole party over to Mondomer.

At the moment, however, when the knight had delivered the last piece of information about his daughter, a horseman was seen advancing to the groupe from the eastward, making gestures with his hands, and urging his horse to the utmost speed. When he approached—

"How now, Fenton?" cried Hugh, struck with his hurried deportment, and manifest alarm.

"Thank Heaven I've lit upon your honour!" returned the other: "seven men have been sent out different ways: ah! Sir Hugh! bad tidings!"

They turned aside for a moment together, and, while the Belton people looked on with speechless interest, Fenton was seen to dismount; when Hugh leaped upon his horse, and approaching Sir Giles, wrung his hand hastily, and without opposition.

"If you have tenderness left for any of your friends," said Hugh, "you will be shocked to hear that my uncle is alarmingly ill. Heaven guard you all; the time may come when we shall understand each other again." And with that, he flew off towards Mondomer, leaving Sir Giles in a state of mind as unsatisfactory as can well be imagined.

From Fenton the bailiff they now learnt, that Lord Mondomer had been, during the

whole preceding day, expected at the castle, but nothing had been heard of him 'till within an hour of the then present time, when an express arrived with intelligence that he was seized on the road with a dangerous illness, and lay at an inn about forty miles off, whither it was desired that his nephew should immediately repair.

The old knight was absolutely out of himself at this intelligence: the sense of his severe demeanor towards Hugh, (though he really thought it not merely justifiable, but a sort of duty) gave him now the most poignant self-reproach. He proposed nothing, spoke to nobody, and seemed lost in harrassing reflexions.

Alice, therefore, having communicated to the young men of their party, who now rejoined them, as much as she thought proper of what had taken place, attributing the dejection of Sir Giles entirely to the unexpected news of his friend's dangerous situation; the whole company commenced their return. Margaret

and Elinor said but little in the course of it; their father less; and the Stanley girl not much more. She was interested, and being a good-natured lass, really affected, by what she had accidentally become mistress of. And as it happened, they were all at liberty to indulge their thoughts, for Sir George Stanley (upon some casual mention of Lord Rochester) remarked, that he owed all his fortune to his awkwardness; for if he had not been thrown from his horse in presenting the device, the king would never have thought twice about him.

"And no wonder," the baronet added, "he got the fall,—he can no more ride than a tinker; nor are there above three in the court set that can."

That position was unanimously agreed to, but wide indeed was their difference when those three came to be particularized, and a spirited, and, in one respect, candid debate followed; in which each readily gave up the horsemanship of his own most intimate friends, laying

claim, however, on their part, to credit for all the cardinal virtues, which were generally conceded.

Young Mondomer, meanwhile, lost no time in making for the place where his uncle had been struck with a fit of epilepsy, to which for many years he had been subject, but never hitherto experienced so alarming an attack. By the time Hugh had proceeded twelve miles, however, he saw a considerable cavalcade advancing upon the road towards him, and soon perceived the poor sick peer borne in a sort of litter upon men's shoulders.

His countenance brightened upon seeing his nephew, and he made some abortive efforts to speak; but those efforts failing, he gave up the attempt with a smile of good-humoured resignation, and took Hugh's hand, which he held for a considerable time, pressing it ever and anon to his heart with much fervour and affection.

From John Hannacott, who rode nearly upon a level with our hero, on the side

farthest from the litter, Hugh learnt (the intelligence was given in whispers) that the preceding night had been a better one with his uncle than the one which immediately followed the seizure, that he had enjoyed several hours of uninterrupted sleep, and awoke in the morning perfectly able to speak, and so much better in other respects, that he was resolute in making an attempt to gain the comforts and accommodation of his own castle. He had therefore proceeded in his coach, the slow pace of which, it was thought, could not materially annoy him, till within a mile or so of the spot where Hugh met them. There, a relapse, or, as Hannacott apprehended, a stroke of palsy, rendered it necessary for him to be conveyed as we have described, the remainder of the way. In reply to Hugh's anxious inquiries as to his real opinion of his lord's state, old John shook his head, and recommended the sending expresses, without delay, for all the medical advice that could be collected to his aid

throughout the north. And such exertions and alacrity were displayed (for the peer was, in truth, a kind, indulgent master, and proportionally loved by his whole establishment,) that in an extraordinarily short space of time two physicians had arrived from Durham, and a medical man of experience in another department, from Newcastle. Hannacott proved quite right; a paralytic stroke (the treatment of which at that time was either very imperfectly understood, or the disease itself more certainly fatal) had, without doubt, taken place, and there was little or no hope.

Young Mondomer was unremitting in his attentions, sat up the entire first night with his uncle, and, 'till the physicians arrived, nothing on earth could have induced him to leave his apartment.

Before it was light, on the morning of the fourth day after he had been brought to the castle, Lord Mondomer's speech returned to him at intervals; he expressed himself to be feeling no pain, but growing rapidly weaker

and weaker, and desired his nephew to be sent for. Hugh, in a moment at his uncle's bed-side, was in raptures at the sound of his voice again. But a look from the medical person who stood on the other side of the bed, made him repress his transport, while, in a feeble voice, his uncle observed: —

" Do not deceive yourself, my dearest Hugh, I'm failing fast. Let them all go. Let them leave the room. You stay."

This direction was instantly complied with.

" Do you hear me, Hugh? Do you understand what I say! Come nearer to me.'

Hugh sat upon the bed, supporting his uncle in his arms.

" Simcox both read and talked with me yesterday," said the old gentleman, " and it was comfortable. But this world is flitting away. Would to Heaven, I say now, that I had cared less about it,—that my life had been like your father's. I thank God, Hugh,

his example has not been lost upon you. Cling to that, my beloved child, which will not fail you when you lie dying as I do now."

Hugh pressed him in his arms, sobbing violently, but could not reply.

"My old faithful friend," added his uncle, "my friend, Sir Giles, has been here, they tell me. The Lord bless him, and all that belong to him! Giles is a good man."

"An excellent good man, nothing will ever make me doubt it," said Hugh, with an effort to answer.

"Be attentive to Simcox, my dear, and kind to old John, and all of them. I know you will.—My sister—Oh! I fear, I fear."

This was followed by a heavy groan, and he sunk upon the pillow; then recovering himself—

"She is not—not the guide for you to look to—to trust to—in deep—in the great concern of life. Stop!—I had something more to say—but" raising his hand to his head, "'tis gone—'tis passed away."

He then again fell back into his nephew's arms, who, alarmed by a convulsive movement about the mouth, called in the attendants. But all was over; without a single pang as far as it could be ascertained, certainly without any struggle.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

J. MOYES, GREVILLE STREET, LONDON.